THE OTHER SHIITES

WORLDS OF ISLAM
WELTEN DES ISLAMS
MONDES DE L'ISLAM

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THE OTHER SHIITES

From the Mediterranean to Central Asia

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Cover illustration: Representation of Husayn on his horse, fixed on an electric pole at the entrance of Baalbeck (Lebanon), October 1995. Photo: Florian Schwarz.

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The Other Shiites:
From the Mediterranean to Central Asia
An Introduction

Shia Islam is generally associated with Iran, but Shiite communities are to be found in most countries of the Muslim World and, as a consequence of migration, in many other places as well. The aim of this book, whose original nucleus came out of a conference in Geneva in 2002,[1] is to give an overview of the diversity and multiplicity of Shiism outside Iran in the last two centuries.

Despite this challenging diversity of Shia communities in the Muslim world, we think it is justified to speak of a category of "other Shiites" (meaning those living outside Iran) and to dedicate a book to them. For, beyond their differences, they share a common feature in their minority status or – as in the case of Iraq – their treatment as a minority by the ruling Sunni elites. The identity of these communities is built around this crucial factor – which differs so markedly from the situation in Iran, the only country where Twelver Shiism is the official faith. This minority status brings with it other perspectives and other meanings, transforming Shiite identity into a political, economic, social and cultural issue.

Rituals, especially those marking the death of Imam Husayn during the month of Muharram, are for most Shiite groups a fundamental element of identity construction and self-affirmation, even if, as it is sometimes the case, Sunnis also participate in the commemorations.

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1   *Images, representations and perceptions in the Shia world*, 17–19 October 2002, University of Geneva / Graduate Institute for International Studies (IUHEI) / Graduate Institute for Development Studies (IUED).

The public performance of such rituals is also a statement about the Shiite presence in a Sunni environment. While the Muharram celebrations are the main event, other means of asserting difference include the cult of saints for instance and the specific beliefs transmitted mostly by oral tradition. More recently, use of the Internet has created new spaces of activity and self-understanding for the various communities, becoming a means to draw together divergent traditions by making them accessible to individuals all over the world, independently of their origin.

Our book is structured around three topics: the relationship of Shia communities to the Sunni regimes *(Shia Minorities and the State)*, the public affirmation of their identities through specific rituals and social attitudes *(Rituals and Social Practices as Identity Markers)*, and the strengthening of these identities through traditional religious rituals and cultural performances, or through the re-interpretation and adaptation of these to present-day life *(Reinterpreting Tradition)*.

Shia Minorities and the State

In the late nineteenth century, the Sunni character of the Ottoman state was reinforced and the Constitution of 1876 declared the Sultan spiritual leader of all (Sunni) Muslims. At the same time, in the Mesopotamian provinces of the Empire, the numbers of Shiites had dramatically increased since the beginning of the century, as a consequence of missionary work by Shiite clerics. Ottoman policy toward the Shia community of Iraq is analysed by GÖKHAN ÇETINSAYA ("The Ottoman View of the Shiite Community of Iraq in the Late Nineteenth Century"). During the period in question, the Iraqi *vilayets* of Baghdad and Basra were home to a substantial population of Arabic-speaking Shiite Muslims. To the Ottoman authorities, the presence of such a large and growing population in Iraq represented a crucial political problem, since they regarded it as potentially disloyal. In the late 1880s and early 1890s a serious review of the issue led to various measures to

stall the growth of the Shiite sect and a radical programme for religious rapprochement between Shiite and Sunni Islam. For his article Çetinsaya has drawn extensively on archive sources, most of them previously unexplored.

The term "Alevi", as HANS-LUKAS KIESER explains ("The Anatolian Alevis' Ambivalent Encounter with Modernity in Late Ottoman and Early Republican Turkey"), covers a number of groups living in the eastern part of Anatolia. They differ linguistically, as some speak Turkish (Western Alevis) and others Kurdish (Eastern Alevis), but they have in common the adoration of Imam 'Ali, a refusal of the *shari'a*, and a long history of marginalization in rural and mountainous areas. The creation of the secular Turkish Republic in 1923 and the abolition of the caliphate in 1924 did not lead to major integration of the Alevis into the army and the state, in spite of the hopes that many of them had invested in the changes. In the new state created by Mustafa Kemal national identity was built first of all on Turkishness – to the exclusion therefore of religion. This gradually changed over the years, so that Sunni Islam became a basic factor for belonging to the Turkish state. The Alevis again felt excluded, and this contributed to their large-scale emigration to Germany in the second half of the twentieth century.

When Musa al-Sadr arrived in Lebanon in 1959, HUSSEIN GHARBIEH says ("Hizbullah and the Legacy of Imam Musa al-Sadr"), he realized that the Shiites could play a constructive role in the national political system. First, although he believed that reforms were essential, al-Sadr concentrated his activities on the preservation of Lebanon and the co-existence of its communities. Second, he focused on improving the status of the Shiites through their integration into the system. Third, he engaged in strengthening ties with Syria as the major player in Lebanese politics. And finally, after the Israeli invasion of 1978, he vigorously called for the implementation of Security Council resolution 425. Such positions were adhered to by the Supreme Shia Council and Amal. However, following al-Sadr's mysterious disappearance in 1978, these objectives were strongly challenged by Hizbullah, a party established in 1984. In the beginning, it was opposed to the principles laid down by

al-Sadr: it not only advocated an Islamic state in Lebanon, but also sought to eliminate any Shia institution that did not suit its purposes. Revolutionary Iran helped Hizbullah to strengthen its position within the Shia community. The resulting conflict between the two factions divided the community and led to long and bloody fighting. But there came a time when Hizbullah could no longer pursue its agenda and was forced to make fundamental changes in order to survive within the Lebanese system. Eventually, writes Gharbieh, Hizbullah had to adopt al-Sadr's agenda.

The Shia community's position within the complex game of Lebanese politics since the civil war is the topic of DANIEL MEIER's article ("The Shiites of Lebanon in the Post-War Era: a New Identity?"). Through analysis of their marriage strategies with Palestinians, Meier shows how Lebanon's Shiites have developed a new self-awareness that makes such unions acceptable, in spite of an attitude of rejection they are supposed to have developed politically toward Palestinian refugees. It is true that, in a process starting in 1982, Shiite militias came to replace the Palestinians as a political and military force in the South, after several clashes between the two groups that made enemies of the former allies. Since the end of the war, Amal and a fortiori Hizbullah have gained a dominant position on the political scene, seemingly in opposition to the Palestinians. During fieldwork in the Shia community, however, Meier was able to observe that the perception of these factors in the population is more balanced. Theoretically, marriage between Shiites – especially Shiite women – and Palestinians should be refused for two reasons: because of the political changes just mentioned, and because the majority of Palestinians are Sunnis. However, this is not what actually happens, and Meier supposes that the strengthening of the Shiites' position within the Lebanese state has allowed them to enter into marital alliances with a discredited community like the Palestinians without losing prestige.

MARIAM ABOU ZAHAB analyses the politicization of the Shia community in Pakistan between 1979 and 1988 ("The Politicization of the Shia Community in Pakistan in the 1970s and 1980s"). The Pakistani Shia minority, which today accounts for 15 per cent of the population,

was traditionally linked to the 'ulama' of Najaf. It remained aloof from politics until the mid-1970s, but then several factors impelled its religious and political mobilization: the Iranian revolution of 1979, the Iran-Iraq war, the transposition to Pakistani soil of the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and the Sunni islamization policy of Zia-ul-Haq after 1979. At the forefront of its politicization were the Imamia Students' Organization (ISO), founded in 1972 and closely linked to Iran, and a new generation of clerics educated in Qom, most of whom did not belong to the religious establishment. Certain groups became more radical and converted themselves into a political party in 1987 under the leadership of Allama Arif Hussein al Husseini, whose role may be compared to that of Musa al-Sadr in Lebanon. New cleavages appeared between the "old Shia" and the "new Shia" (also called Wahhabi Shia). After the assassination of Allama Husseini in 1988 and the outbreak of widespread sectarian violence, the revolutionary zeal fell away. Among the reasons for the failure of this movement is the fact that the clerics educated in Iran had had no experience of the functioning of the Pakistani political system. Furthermore, they were seen as dependent on Iran and therefore as a threat.

Rituals and Social Practices as Identity Markers

YITZHAK NAKASH writes about "The Muharram rituals and the cult of the saints among Iraqi Shiites". His argument is that the specific moral and cultural values of Iraqi Shiites were built into their rituals and religious practices. In Iraq, Shia society is by and large of recent Arab tribal origin; religion encapsulated but did not permeate its tribal value system. This found embodiment in the way that Iraqi Shiites observe the Muharram rituals and in the images they attach to the imams and other Shiite saints. In particular, the visitation of the shrines of the imams, as well as the tombs of local dead saints in Iraq, carried important social and political functions. Imams and saints were

venerated also because of their physical attributes, which exert a fascina-
tion on Iraqi Arabs and their ideal of manhood. In contrast, Sufism
played a minor role among the Shiite rural and tribal population of
Iraq.

SABRINA MERVIN explores 'Ashura' rituals in the Shiite communi-
ties of Lebanon and Syria ("'Ashura': Some Remarks on Ritual Practices
in Different Shiite Communities (Lebanon and Syria)"). Before ana-
lysing their evolution in old shrines such as Sayyida Zaynab outside
Damascus, the author gives a historical overview of the practices in the
region. First, Mervin notes the importation of rituals from Iraq and
Iran at the time of the Ottoman Empire, when many practices were
forbidden. Second, she sheds light on Muhsin al-Amin's reforms and
the debate he triggered in the 1920s; the Damascene Shiite *mujtahid*
prohibited re-enactments of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, as well
as flagellation and other mortification practices that he judged to be
innovations. Third, Mervin explains the spread and politicization of
rituals – for instance, after the loss of Palestine in 1948 and, a few
decades later, with Musa al-Sadr's speech in Baalbek in 1974, when he
incited the Shiites to use their ritual ceremonies in order to express
"revolutionary fury" and "constructive protest".

Relying on British sources, as well as on local publications, manu-
scripts and personal interviews and observations, MICHEL BOIVIN fo-
cuses on Muharram and other Shiite rituals in the Indian subcontinent
("Representations and Symbols in Muharram and Other Rituals: Frag-
ments of Shiite Worlds from Bombay to Karachi"). His study is di-
vided into three main parts. The first examines Muharram celebrations
in colonial Bombay, seeing them both as a subversive force against Brit-
ish rule in India and as an integrative force for outsider communities
who were allowed to merge into the urban population. The second
part deals with the evolution of Shiite identity in the Khojah commu-
nity through their literature in the nineteenth and early-twentieth cen-
turies. The third part takes up the relationship between Shiism and
Sufism in Gujarat and Sindh, through a study of representations and
symbols used in some shrines of the region, with special reference to
the cult of the Sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.

'Ashura' among the Hazara Shiite community of Quetta (Pakistan) is the object of ALESSANDRO MONSUTTI's paper ("Image of the Self, Image of the Other: Social Organization and the Role of 'Ashura' among the Hazaras of Quetta (Pakistan)"). A series of dramatic events led this minority to leave Afghanistan and settle in Quetta in waves. For many Hazaras, the tragic destiny of Imam Husayn mirrors their own painful history. During the annual Muharram celebrations, people gather in the evenings in special places *(imambarga)*. Each *imambarga* organizes a procession, and there is a spirit of competition among the different groups. Some penitents (mostly young single men) beat themselves with chains, knives or razor blades. One wonders how and why the Hazaras adopted this kind of expression, which does not exist in Hazarajat in its extreme form. The commemoration of Husayn's martyrdom has progressively become a central aspect of Hazara culture in Quetta; each year the Hazaras present and represent their own identity and display their political expectations to other groups, which they consider as hostile and impious and identify with the Umayyads of early Islam.

Reinterpreting Tradition

NILE GREEN analyses counter-narratives of saintly identity in the Deccan ("Shiism, Sufism and Sacred Space in the Deccan: Counter-Narratives of Saintly Identity in the Cult of Shah Nur"). Situated in the city of Aurangabad, the shrine of Shah Nur Hammami (d. 1689) has a mixed Sunni and Shiite history. He is presented either as a descendant of 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani or as a Shiite saint, a Husayni *sayyid* in fact. This occurrence of Shiite motifs is of great interest, especially as the Mughal-era saints and shrines of Aurangabad may be seen as representative of the new Sunni (Mughal) political and cultural order. Saints and shrines were sponsored in an attempt to create a new Sunni sacred space in the Deccan after several centuries of Shiite dominance. Moreover, the changing clientele of the saint and the support of different Sunni and Shiite

representatives of state left a mixed architectural legacy. This was of particular interest after the 1720s with regard to the foundation of the Hyderabad state, of which Aurangabad was the first capital. In the present day, both Sunnis and Shiites regard Shah Nur as their own community patron. Thus, in contrast to the long and alternating fortunes of Sunnism and Shiism in the Deccan, the history of Shah Nur and his shrine demonstrates processes of overlapping, competition and compromise in the formation of saintly traditions and sacred space in Islam.

Religious poetry and music in the Ismaili community of Tajik Badakhshan is GABRIELLE VAN DEN BERG's area of research ("The 'Sura of the Gift' in the Oral Tradition of the Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan"). The Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan form a religious and ethnic minority in the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan; it uses Persian as its language of religion. Isolated until recently from the main centres of Ismailism, the community has developed a number of distinctive traditions, such as the performance of a particular kind of religious poetry, so-called *maddahkhani*, which plays a major role in their religious life. A range of influences has shaped the tradition of *maddahkhani*, and the same is true in general for Ismailism in Badakhshan.

Religious rapprochement *(taqrib)* with the Sunnis has been a concern for many Shiite clerics during the twentieth century. In Iraq, where it was intertwined with the political role of the Shiites in the newly constituted state, this was a highly sensitive issue. Muhammad Mahdi al-Khalisi, WERNER ENDE writes, was one of the main actors in this debate during the 1950s ("Success and Failure of a Shiite Modernist: Muhammad ibn Muhammad Mahdi al-Khalisi (1890–1963)"). His major detractor, the Iraqi poet and journalist Mahmud al-Mallah, fought against Khalisi's attempts at rapprochement by declaring that Shiism did not belong to Islam, a view also embraced by the country's Muslim Brotherhood. However, the main opponents of reconciliation between the two schools came from Shiite ranks, as the article demonstrates.

STEPHAN ROSINY explores how Shiite Muslims have adopted the Internet as a tool for their purposes and integrated it into their world of beliefs and religious practices ("The Twelver Shia Online: Challenges for its Religious Authorities"). Numerous clerics of renown operate

websites in different languages, Arabic, Persian and English being the most widespread. As a result, computer-literate Shiites are able to access their religious leaders directly, bypassing intermediaries in a virtual space where all manner of questions can be asked without fear. This cross-border medium may also have an impact on the formation of the Shiite clerical hierarchy, particularly affecting the role of the *marja' al-taqlid* as an exclusive source of authority. Although it is difficult to make a final assessment, the information revolution has been further enlarging the public space of discourse. A list of websites is provided at the end of Rosiny's essay.

Shia Minorities and the State

Gökhan Çetinsaya

The Ottoman View of the Shiite Community of Iraq in the Late Nineteenth Century

The Iraqi provinces of Baghdad and Basra were home to a substantial population of Arabic-speaking Shiite Muslims. Their precise number is not known, as the Ottoman government compiled no statistics on the matter, but it is clear that they constituted an absolute majority in the two provinces.[1] Furthermore, as a result of conversions, this Shiite Muslim population appears to have grown throughout the nineteenth century at the expense of the Sunni sect.[2] To the Ottoman authorities this represented a serious political problem, as the Empire was a Sunni state with which its Shiite subjects could not be trusted to identify. Nor, in principle, did Shiite Muslims recognize the Ottoman claim to possession of the Great Islamic Caliphate, a claim which Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) repeatedly emphasized in an effort to give religious legitimacy to his regime. In short, the Shiites were regarded as potentially disloyal.

The problem also had an international dimension. The neighbouring Shiite state of Iran had historical and religious claims in Iraq, which had led it over the centuries to fight numerous wars with the Ottoman Empire. Even in the second part of the nineteenth century, at a time

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1 For different estimates, see V. Cuinet, *La Turquie D'Asie*, III, Paris, 1894, 17, 220–21; Ş. Sami, *Kamusu'l-Alam*, 6 vols, Istanbul, 1306–16; Admiralty, *A Handbook of Mesopotamia*, I, London, 1916, 66; Foreign Office, *Mesopotamia*, London, 1920, 36; J. N. Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Shi'as*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992, 9.

2 See Y. Nakash, *The Shiites of Iraq*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, 25–48; idem., "The Conversion of Iraq's Tribes to Shi'ism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26 (1994), 443–63.

when the Iranian state was internationally weak, the Ottoman authorities retained a strong sense that Iran might pose a military threat, especially in the event of a Russian invasion of Anatolia. In addition, the precise definition of the Ottoman-Iranian border remained a constant source of tension.[3]

There was also constant communication between Iraq and Iran. Iraq contained the most sacred Shiite shrines, located at Najaf, Karbala, Kazimayn and Samarra, collectively known as the Atabat. In the eighteenth century the Atabat became a centre for the *Usuli* school of Shiite jurisprudence (which espoused a political role for the ulama), and in the nineteenth century it retained its primacy as a center of religious authority.[4] Most of the important Shiite *mujtahids* (jurisconsults) either resided and taught there, or studied there for a time before returning to Iran. Together with these *mujtahids*, a large number of *mollas*, *akhunds* and students resided in the Atabat.[5] First in the Tobacco Protest of 1891–92, then from 1902 onwards and especially during the years of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905–11), the *mujtahids* of the Atabat became actively involved in Iranian politics. In addition, there were many Iranian subjects at the Atabat: religious students, merchants and pilgrims. Each year a sizeable number of people from Iran and India visited the shrine cities of Iraq, or brought the remains of their relatives to bury at the Atabat.[6]

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3   For Ottoman-Iranian relations in the nineteenth century, see M.R. Nasiri, *Nasireddin Şah Zamanında Osmanlı-İran Münasebetleri, 1848–1896*, Tokyo, 1991; R. Schofield (ed.), *The Iran-Iraq Border 1840–1958*, 9 vols, Archive Editions, 1989, vols 1–4; G. Çetinsaya, "Tanzimat'tan Birinci Dünya Savaşı'na Osmanlı-İran İlişkileri," *KÖK Araştırmalar*, Osmanlı Özel Sayısı, 2000, 11–23.

4   See H. Algar, "Atabat," *E. Ir.*, II, 902–3; M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shiite Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shiism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, 143–4.

5   See M. Litvak, *Shiite Scholars of nineteenth-century Iraq: The ulama of Najaf and Karbala*, Cambridge: CUP, 1998. See R. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985, 205 ff.

6   See Nakash, *The Shiites of Iraq*, 163–201, 238 ff.; J.G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia*, Calcutta, 1908–1915, I/2, 2358–63.

The British too had links with the Atabat. Not only did numerous Shiites from British India visit and reside at the Atabat, but the British government had direct links with the *mujtahids* through the Oudh Bequest. This fund had been established by the King of Oudh in India to provide for the annual distribution of charitable money at the Atabat. Following Oudh's annexation by the British government of India in the 1850s, control over the bequest had passed into British hands and the annual distribution was conducted by the British Consul-General at Baghdad, through two selected *mujtahids*, one at Najaf and one at Karbala.[7] For these favored mujtahids the bequest was a major source of local influence and prestige, and indirectly it was a potential channel for British influence. Other funds, from Iran and India, were also donated to the Atabat: the Iranian Government, for example, made annual grants to the shrines at Karbala, Najaf and Kazimayn.[8]

Since the Shiite ulama enjoyed great prosperity and wealth through the Oudh bequest and other donations, they exercised much influence in Iraq, especially among the tribes. It appears that through well-established madrasas in the cities, and through *akhunds* (*mollas* who wandered among the tribal population), the Shiite sect expanded in the region. Given that *mujtahids* distributed sizeable sums of money to religious students and the poor, it comes as no surprise that some of the tribesmen, especially newly settled ones, and some small town-dwellers were attracted to Shiism.[9] On the other hand, there is evidence of a decline in the Sunni establishments in Iraq in the second half of the nineteenth century. As a result of the Tanzimat's centralization policies, the revenues of the *waqf* lands which had hitherto sup-

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7   See J.R.I. Cole, "'Indian Money' and the Shiite Shrine Cities of Iraq, 1786–1850", *Middle Eastern Studies* 22 (1986), 461–80; M. Litvak, "Money, Religion, and Politics: The Oudh Bequest in Najaf and Karbala, 1850–1903," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33 (2001), 1–21; Nakash, *The Shiites of Iraq*, 205 ff.; Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, I/1B, 1409–15, 1477–84, 1598–1616.

8   See Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, I/2, 2357.

9   See Nakash, "The Conversion of Iraq's Tribes to Shi'ism"; G.L. Bell, *Review of the Civil Administration of Iraq*, London: HMSO, 1920, 27.

ported the Sunni madrasas and ulama were gradually taken over by the government. The consequent reduction of financial means weakened Sunni religious education.[10]

II

The growth of Shiism among the tribal population in Iraq was known to the Porte before the Abdülhamid era, though it was not regarded with the same seriousness as it would be later.[11] It did cause grave concern to the Ottoman authorities during the period of Midhat Paşa's governor-generalship (1869–72),[12] but for the next fifteen years they appear to have paid little attention to the issue; it is, for example, noteworthy that few of the reports on Iraqi affairs submitted to Abdülhamid before 1885 mention the Shiite problem.[13] From 1885 onwards the

10 See J. R. Barnes, *An Introduction to Religious Foundations in the Ottoman Empire* Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987, 67–153; B. Yediyıldız and N. Öztürk, "Tanzimat Dönemi Vakıf Uygulamaları" in H. D. Yıldız (ed.)*, 150. Yılında Tanzimat*, Ankara: TTK, 1992, 571–91.

11 See Nasiri, *Nasireddin Şah*, passim; Bruce Masters, "The Treaties of Erzurum (1828 and 1848) and the Changing Status of Iranians in the Ottoman Empire," *Iranian Studies* 24 (1991), 3–15; J. R. I. Cole and M. Momen, "Mafia, Mob and Shiism in Iraq: the Rebellion of Ottoman Karbala, 1824–1843," *Past and Present* 112 (August 1986), 112–43.

12 For interesting details, see the letter from Ali Paşa to Midhat Paşa in A. H. Midhat, *The Life of Midhat Pasha*, London: Murray, 1903, 61–2; and the letters of Osman Hamdi Bey, who worked under Midhat Paşa at Baghdad, to his father, Edhem Paşa, in E. Eldem, "Quelques lettres d'Osman Hamdi Bey à son père lors de son séjour en Irak (1869–70)," *Anatolia Moderna* 1 (1990), 126–7.

13 The exceptions were Mehmed Namık Paşa's two reports: A. N. Sinaplı, *Şeyhül Vüzera, Serasker Mehmet Namık Paşa*, Istanbul, 1987, 259–60, dated 25 Receb 1296–15 July 1879, and BOA, Y.PRK.KOM. 4/33, 11 Safer 1301–12 December 1883.

attitude changed, and reports persistently emphasized the growth of Shiism in the region.[14]

The first signs of this new concern were provoked by the circulation in Istanbul of a pamphlet called *Hüseyniye Risalesi*, which sought to encourage Shiism.[15] Ottoman officials became aware of the pamphlet in August 1885, when Shaikh Gümüşhânevi Ahmed Ziyâüddin Efendi, a famous Naqshbandi-Khalidi shaikh,[16] forwarded a copy of it to the Palace. As soon as he received this, the Sultan consulted Hoca Ishak Efendi, the author of several books on heretical beliefs in Islam,[17] and asked him to prepare a report.

In his report, after describing the pamphlet *(Hüseyniye Risalesi)* in detail, Hoca Ishak Efendi pointed out that "up until twenty years ago, the population of Iraq were in the majority followers of the Sunni sect" and the Porte had had no need to fear an Iranian threat. However:[18]

> 15 or 20 years ago, the Valis of Baghdad seized, on behalf of the state treasury, the villages, which had been given to the ulama for living, and as a result, scholars and ulama in Baghdad were altogether destroyed. The Iranians, however, in the three towns [the Atabat] and in Najaf and Karbala, have 5,000–6,000 religious students distributed among villages and among tribes, and teach and inculcate harmful books like this one. As a result, the Sunnis in Iraq remained unawakened. […] Now, however, the people of that region seem to be a natural army for Iran.

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14 This is a relatively new subject in the literature. For different treatments of the subject, see S. Deringil, "The Struggle Against Shiism in Hamidian Iraq: A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propoganda," *Die Welt des Islams* 30 (1990), 45–62, and C. Eraslan, *II. Abdülhamid ve Islam Birliği*, Istanbul: Ötüken, 1992, 307 ff.

15 BOA, Irade-Dahiliye, no. 75763, 27 Şevval 1302–9 August 1885.

16 For his life (d. 1893) and activities, see I. Gündüz, *Gümüşhânevi Ahmed Ziyâüddin: hayatı, eserleri, tarikat anlayışı, ve Halidiyye tarikatı*, Istanbul: Seha Neşriyat, 1984; B. Abu-Manneh, "Shaykh Ahmed Ziyaüddin el-Gümüşhanevi and the Ziyai-Khalidi sub-order," in B. Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, 1826–1876*, Istanbul: ISIS, 2001, 149–59.

17 For Harputizâde Hoca Ishak Efendi (1803–92), see I. Sunguroğlu, *Harput Yollarında*, Istanbul, 1959, 124–7; B. M. Tahir, *Osmanlı Müellifleri*, eds A. F. Yavuz and I. Özen, Istanbul, n. d., I, 191–92.

18 BOA, Irade-Dahiliye, no. 75763, enclosing the report by Hoca Ishak Efendi.

Disturbed, Abdülhamid instructed the Grand Vizier to seize all copies of this "seditious pamphlet," and suggested that Shaikh Ahmed Ziyâüddin Efendi be asked by the *Meşihat* (office of the *Şeyhülislam*) to write a counter-pamphlet.[19]

In the following year, the Ottoman government was further alerted by a disturbance that broke out between Sunnis and Shiites in Samarra, where the chief Shiite mujtahid, Mirza Hasan Shirazi, had resided since 1874. In June 1886, Mirza Muhsin Khan, the Iranian Ambassador to the Porte, asked to see the Sultan privately and pressed for the deportation of certain people from Samarra. Claiming that the Sunni *Müftü* (mufti) of Samarra had cursed the Shiites in his Friday sermons, he asked for the deportation of the *Müftü*, the *Naib*, the Mayor and two others, who were said to have mistreated the Shiite population of the town. At the same time, he asked the Sultan to give permission for the repair of the *türbe* (Caliph Ali's tomb) in Najaf.[20]

After consultation with his Council of Ministers, Abdülhamid informed Kamil Paşa, the Grand Vizier, that the *türbe* of Najaf would be repaired by the Ottoman government, not by the Shah. If, however, the Shah wished to send some gifts and ornaments, these would be welcomed.[21] Muhsin Khan objected, and asked for a reconsideration, on the grounds of the Shah's special position. Although Kamil Paşa was inclined to give way, noting that it was customary for the Iranian Shahs to repair the *türbe* and suggesting that a concession might favourably impress the Shah, the Sultan did not change his mind.[22]

The Iranian government also continued to demand the deportation of certain people from Samarra. Abdülhamid sought the opinion of Kamil Paşa, who proposed the postponement of a decision until the province of Baghdad had completed its enquiries on the matter.[23] In late October 1886, Abdülhamid instructed Kamil Paşa to reach a deci-

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19 Ibid.
20 BOA, Y.A. Hus. 192/98, 25 Ramazan 1303–27 June 1886.
21 BOA, Irade-Meclis-i Mahsus, no. 3626, 10 Şevval 1303–12 July 1886.
22 BOA, Y.A. Hus. 193/86, 25 Şevval 1303–27 July 1886.
23 Ibid.

sion forthwith and to close the file.[24] Kamil Paşa replied with the results of the latest investigation, which had been carried out by the Commander of the Sixth Army through a special agent. It was stated in the Commander's telegram that, although the Shiites had accused the *Müftü* of Samarra of acts of provocation, this was denied by the Sunnis in Samarra. He added that an atmosphere of tension and provocative rumours prevailed in the town because of the activities of the Iranian Consul and certain Shiites, and in particular because of a long-standing conflict between Ibrahim Efendi, the *Müftü*, and Mirza Muhammad Efendi [Shirazi], a Shiite *alim*. The Müşir warned that it would be impossible to restore calm as long as these two men stayed in Samarra. In view of the special importance that Iran attached to the issue, Kamil Paşa was anxious to carry out a further official investigation before reaching any decisions, and he proposed the appointment of a special commissioner to Baghdad to deal with the problem and to prepare a general reform policy for Iraq.[25] Nothing appears to have come of this, however.

The attention of the central government was again drawn to the Shiite problem by a report from a former *Mutasarrif* of Basra, Mehmed Ali, submitted in January 1889.[26] Mehmed Ali warned that Shiism was expanding in Iraq day by day, and that more than a third of the tribes were already Shiite. The reason for the growth of Shiism, he suggested, was that there were neither Sunni imams nor Sunni preachers in the mosques and shrines of the region, whereas Iranian *akhunds* were continuously preaching in and around the Atabat and traveling among the tribes "like Christian missionaries." Since the people of Iraq saw only these *akhunds*, and since they were anyway very ignorant and could not even distinguish between the two sects, they naturally came to consider Shiism as Islam.[27]

24 BOA, Y. A. Hus. 196/1, Gurre-i Safer 1304–30 October 1886.
25 Ibid., 18 Teşrin-i evvel 1302–30 October 1886.
26 BOA, YEE 14/366/126/9, 8 Kanun-ı sâni 1304–20 January 1889.
27 Ibid.

According to Mehmed Ali, the main danger resulting from this was to the loyalty of the local troops: the fact that ninety per cent of the Sixth Army belonged to the Shiite sect should be a matter of grave concern, especially as the natural enemy of the state in the region was Iran and troubles were continually occurring among the Shiite tribes. Mehmed Ali added that this might even pave the way for British intervention in the region. As to countermeasures, Mehmed Ali proposed, first, that a number of Sunni ulama should live in each shrine, mosque and *madrasa*, and preach and expand the Sunni sect; second, that the number of primary, secondary and technical schools should be increased as soon as possible, with special attention to their religious curriculum; and third, that the Sixth Army troops should be replaced with forces from the Fourth and Fifth Armies.[28]

In the middle of 1890, a Committee of Military Inspection *(Heyet-i Teftişiye-i Askeriye)* was dispatched to Iraq to conduct a general investigation, and its detailed report finally prompted the Palace and the Porte to embark upon a serious review of the Shiite issue. The committee devoted a full chapter of its report to the Shiite problem, warning that because a great deal of money was spent by Iranian and Indian Shiites to spread and propagate their sect, Shiism was expanding day by day in the region, while the number of people belonging to the Sunni sect was declining. Thus far, the committee added, nothing had been done to stop this.[29]

Meanwhile Sırrı Paşa, the Vali of Baghdad, was asked to give his opinion. His report too, dated 24 March 1891, expressed great concern at the growth of Shiism and especially blamed the Oudh Bequest, under which the British Consul-General at Baghdad annually distributed 40,000 *lira* to the Shiite mujtahids, religious students and shrine keepers of Najaf, Karbala and Samarra.[30] A certain amount of Iranian money also found its way to the chief *mujtahid* of Samarra, Mirza Hasan Shirazi. Being rich and wealthy, these *mujtahids* easily attracted the people of the region to Shiism and were able to establish schools and *madrasas* to teach

28 Ibid.
29 BOA, Y.A. Res. 55/9, 28 Ramazan 1308–7 May 1891.
30 BOA, Y.A. Res. 55/9 (4), 13 Şaban 1308–24 March 1891.

and propagate Shiism, whereas the Sunni madrasas were in a state of backwardness and inactivity. Sırrı Paşa argued that it was not only religiously but also politically important to stop the spread of Shiism, and that there was much for the central government to do. It was essential to establish new schools and *madrasas*, and to improve the existing ones. This would require a great amount of money, however, and the province currently had no authority to spend even the smallest sum on education. The only solution was an increase in the province's legal powers, or direct involvement by central government.[31]

These various reports appear to have seriously worried Abdülhamid. His first practical step, in June 1891, was to order the dismissal of Sırrı Paşa, the Vali of Baghdad: "The Sultan's favour towards Sırrı Paşa has disappeared because of the Iranians' penetration of Baghdad."[32] The following month, highly disturbed by what he had been told about the presence of Shiites in the Sixth Army, Abdülhamid instructed the Grand Vizier and the *Serasker* to transfer some of them to other armies, and to maintain only Sunni soldiers in Baghdad province.[33] Kamil Paşa objected that it was impossible to change people's beliefs by force, and that a coercive policy would simply drive local people to pretend to be Sunnis for a while. Under the circumstances, he argued, the aim could be achieved only by means of education and preaching; a few students from each of the Shiite-inhabited towns and cities, such as Baghdad, Basra, Najaf and Karbala, should be sent to the madrasa of al-Azhar in Egypt, with stipends from the Ottoman government; over a period of eight to ten years, with the help of a good education, they would abandon their "superstitious belief" and come back to their homeland as Sunnis, where they could then be appointed to teach their fellow-countrymen. As the numbers of this kind of ulama increased, they would be able to prevail over the Shiite *mujtahids* who were seducing the ignorant people with superstition. To support his point, Kamil Paşa gave the example of the American Missionaries who, having first brought

31 Ibid.
32 BOA, Y. A. Hus. 248/74, and 248/44, 16 Zilkade 1308–23 June 1891.
33 BOA, Irade-Dahiliye, no. 96880, the *tezkere* of Kamil Paşa, dated 14 Zilhicce 1308–21 July 1891.

up some young Armenians in their schools, later sent them as teachers
and preachers to win over the Armenian community to the Protestant
faith. Kamil Paşa concluded that it would be much more beneficial to
employ this method, instead of using force *(tedabir-i zecriye)*.[34]

Abdülhamid approved Kamil Paşa's proposals except for the idea of
sending the students to Egypt – understandably so, given his suspicion
of it as a potential centre of opposition centre to the Ottoman Caliphate.
Instead, he decided that a school for the students should be established
in Istanbul.[35]

> As there is no need to send Shiite youngsters to Egypt instead of Istanbul, a
> sufficient number of students should be brought to Istanbul in order to be edu-
> cated in Arabic by the madrasa professors appointed by the *Şeyhülislam*, and suf-
> ficient salaries should be assigned to them when they return to their home dis-
> tricts after completing their education and becoming Sunnis.

Accordingly, the Vali of Baghdad selected ten Shiite and two Sunni
children from Baghdad and Karbala and sent them to Istanbul,[36] where
they were later joined by three students from Basra. However, this project
failed to bear the expected fruit. Over a year and a half six students
dropped out of the school and went back to Iraq, and by as late as 1907
only a few of those remaining had completed their studies. In March
of that year, Mahmud, Şevket and Abdulhadi Efendis from that school
were appointed on the Sultan's orders as teachers and preachers in
Baghdad.[37]

34 Ibid.
35 Ibid. Irade dated 16 Zilhicce 1308–23 July 1891.
36 BOA, Irade-Dahiliye, no. 98525, 29 Cemaziyelevvel 1309–31 December 1891.
    Their expenses cost 11,351,50 *kuruş*. In his minute, the Sultan approved the
    action of the Vali, but at the same time noted that since a lot of money was spent
    on these children, the best result must be obtained from their education. In a later
    decree, the Sultan instructed Cevad Paşa to spent 5,000 *kuruş* from the Privy
    Purse for the expenses of these children. See Irade-Dahiliye, no.98993, 19
    Cemaziyelâhir 1309–20 January 1892.
37 C. Eraslan, *İkinci Abdülhamid Devrinde Osmanlı Devleti Dahilinde ve Afrika
    Kıtasında İslam Birliği Faaliyetleri*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Is-
    tanbul, 1985, 64–5.

III

While these steps were being taken by the Sultan and the Porte, a number of reports reached the Palace from officials familiar with Iraq, including Major Ali Riza Bey, former Consul at the Iranian towns of Hoy and Selmas, Mehmed Rifat Efendi, the *Defterdar* of Baghdad, Süleyman Hüsnü Paşa, a prominent statesman living in internal exile in Baghdad, Nusret Paşa, a former confidant of the Sultan, currently serving as Honorary Inspector of 6ᵗʰ Army at Baghdad, and Hüseyin Hüsnü Efendi, a religious scholar who had served in Iraq.

Ali Riza Bey's report suggested a number of reasons for the Shiite expansion in Iraq. First of all, the Atabat lay in Iraq, it was visited each year by thousands of Iranians, and Shiite *mujtahids* and students permanently resided there. Naturally, since most of the people in Iraq were nomads and tribesmen, and had no knowledge of the bad aspects of the Shiite sect, they were easily becoming Shiites.[38] Since, apart from all Iran and a large part of India, 40 percent of the people of Iraq were Shiite, any attempt to halt the spread of Shiism by force would cause resentment among Muslims The report therefore proposed that other measures be taken. Ali Riza Bey blamed local officials for their indifference, and stressed the ignorance of the people as the main reason for the growth of Shiism. Consequently, only the spread of education could provide a solution: "Under the circumstances, it is necessary to open [modern] primary schools throughout Iraq and to teach the principles of the Muslim religion in order to stop the spread of Shiism."[39]

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38 BOA, YEE 14/212/126/7, no date [c. 1890–91]. Ali Riza Bey described the harm done by Shiism to Islam and the Ottomans in history. He argued that every wise person who looked through the heyday of the Ottomans acknowledged that the main aim of the Ottomans was *ila-i kelimetullah*. It is very clear that the Ottoman Sultans had stopped the European armies of the Crusade, and had worked to create a bond between the Muslims of the Far East such as India and China and the centre of the Great Caliphate.

39 Ibid.

In his report of 31 January 1892 Mehmed Rifat Efendi, the *Defterdar* of Baghdad, blamed the Iranian Government for promoting the expansion of Shiism in Iraq.[40] With the help of *akhunds* and *mujtahids*, the Iranians had succeeded in influencing the people, so that more than half of the population were now Shiites. Not only wealthy Shiites but also the Iranian government spent a great deal of money in the Atabat, thereby attracting ordinary people, while local officials had been very tolerant of Shiite festivals and ceremonies. The report also called attention to the situation in the Sixth Army, alleging that *mujtahids* and *akhunds* were conducting propaganda among the soldiers. Like other observers, Mehmed Rifat Efendi emphasized the backwardness of the region: "In contrast to the wealth of Iraq, whose fame once filled the world, a condition of utter poverty now prevails now. [...] The cry of poverty is one of the causes of the spread of Shiism, and perhaps the principal [cause]."[41]

Süleyman Hüsnü Paşa, a prominent statesmen of the 1870s who had been exiled to Baghdad by Abdülhamid in 1878, also touched on the Shiite issue in a memorandum, dated April 1892, on the subject of a general reform in Iraq.[42] He admitted that, because of Iranian *akhunds'* intrigues, most of the people in Iraq had accepted Shiism. Warning that the Shiites did not accept any authority but Mirza Hasan [Shirazi], the chief *mujtahid* of the *Usulis*, he claimed that the latter had much greater influence than the Shah of Iran, as had been clearly and most recently demonstrated during the Tobacco Protest of 1891–92. Süleyman Paşa went on to explain that in this *Usuli* school the *mujtahids* were as powerful as, or even more powerful than, the Pope of the Chris-

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40 BOA, Irade-Meclis-i Mahsus, no. 5537, signed by Menemenlizâde Mehmed Rifat, dated Gurre-i Receb 1309–31 January 1892; for 'Topal' Menemenlizâde Mehmed Rifat Bey (1856–1935), see M. Z. Pakalın, *Maliye Teşkilatı Tarihi*, Ankara: Maliye Bakanlığı Tetkik Kurulu Yayını, 1977), IV, 212 ff.; İ. A. Gövsa, *Türk Meşhurları Ansiklopedisi*, Istanbul: Yedigün, 1946, 324–5.

41 Ibid.

42 BOA, YEE 14/1188/126/9, 9 Ramazan 1309–7 April 1892. For Süleyman Hüsnü Paşa (d. August 1892), see R. Devereux, "Süleyman Paşa's 'The Feeling of the Revolution'," *Middle Eastern Studies* 15 (1979), 5–10.

tians. They held that all governments, including the Iranian, were usurpers, since the rights of government and caliphate belonged to the Twelfth Imam *(Imam-ı Masum).* As a result of this belief, they paid taxes only when confronted with an armed force; otherwise it was regarded as sinful. According to Süleyman Paşa, this was the main reason for the poor revenue yield in the province. His proposed way of countering this was, first, to undermine the Shiites' mischievous beliefs *(akaid)* by distributing such books as *Izharu'l-Hak* by Rahmetullah Efendi, *Risâletu'l-Hamidiyye* by Sayyid Huseyin Cisr [Husayn al-Jisr], and *Tuhfetti'l-Ihvan* by Davud-i Bağdadi, then, after two or three years of education, to send a number of selected students as *da'i*s (missionaries) to these parts of the Empire.[43]

In his report of 1893 on the question of a general reform in Iraq, Nusret Paşa also devoted some pages to the Shiite problem. He wrote that the Iranians were training students in the Shiite *madrasas* of the Atabat, in order to send them among the tribes, and that with the help of money from India and Iran they were converting tribesmen and nomads to Shiism. He further claimed that the Shiites were producing gunpowder and distributing it to the Shiite tribes.[44]

Hüseyin Hüsnü Efendi, a future *Şeyhülislam* who had served in Iraq as inspector of state lands,[45] drafted a report of his own which strongly advocated religious and civil education as the way to forestall the growth of Shiism in Iraq, and to promote the Sunni sect.[46] Noting that the Sunni mosques and *madrasas* in Baghdad were mostly ruined and deserted, and that in the few active *madrasas* the students were incompetent, he urged the government to revive the *madrasas* for

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43 Ibid. On the term "da'i" ("he who summons" to the true faith), see *EI(2)*, II, 97–98.

44 BOA, YEE 14/2256/126/11, 26 Nisan 1309–8 May 1893. For Nusret Paşa, see G. Çetinsaya, "Sultan Abdulhamid II's Officials: the case of Nusret Paşa at Baghdad, 1888–1896," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 21 (2001), 257–67.

45 For Çelebizâde Hüseyin Hüsnü Efendi (1849–1912), see M. İpşirli, *DIA*, XVIII, 552–3; S. Albayrak, *Son Devir Osmanlı Uleması: İlmiye Ricalinin Teracim-i Ahvali*, Istanbul: Medrese Yayınevi, 1980–81, II, 136–39.

46 BOA, YEE 14/454/126/9, no date.

the training of religious students. In order to halt the growth of Shiism, it was necessary to appoint fifteen to twenty *ulama*, with adequate salaries, who would live among the tribes and treach and preach in the towns of Karbala, Hilla, Muntafiq and Amara. These *ulama* should on no account use force, and should not mention that they were connected with the state. Moreover, they should be recruited not in Iraq but from Aleppo or Harput in Syria. Some thirty or forty people should also be sent to the region to teach the Koran and catechism *(ilmihal)*, to lead the prayers, and to live constantly among the tribes. This latter group should preferably be recruited among Arabs, even in and around Baghdad, but care should be taken to ensure that they were Sunni. The two groups of ulama should be supported financially, and it was Hüseyin Hüsnü Efendi's view that land revenues might be used for this purpose.[47]

In another report, undated and unsigned but most probably compiled by a religious scholar,[48] the writer argued that the Ottoman Sultan had a right to stop the growth of Shiism in Ottoman lands: as a Great Caliph, he was consulted even by the British government on the appointment of an imam for the Muslims of South Africa *(Ümid Burnu)*, and so nobody could object to the measures that needed to be taken against the spread of *Rafizilik* (Rafida)[49] in Iraq. He then went on to give some information about the historical antecedents of the Shiite sect in Iraq from the Safavids onwards. He put the blame for the sect's growth on the centuries of tolerance that the Ottoman authorities had shown to the Shiites in Iraq; this was why the "humiliation" *(zelâlet)* had become established and was currently flourishing.[50]

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47 Ibid.
48 BOA, YEE 14/88–11a/88/12, no date.
49 The term originally meant 'rejectors', a term to describe Shiism by Sunnis (*EI(2)*, VIII, 386). For its different meaning ('heretic') in Ottoman usage, see A. Y. Ocak, "Türk Heterodoksi Tarihinde 'Zındık' 'Harici' 'Rafizi' 'Mülhid' ve 'Ehl-i Bid'at' Terimlerine Dair Bazı Düşünceler," *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 12 (1981–82), 514–516, 519.
50 Ibid.

IV

In April 1894 there was a serious outbreak of disturbances between Sunnis and Shiites in Samarra. The incident began as a petty quarrel about some money transaction between a Sunni and a Shiite resident, but it rapidly developed into something like a religious war between Sunnis and Shiites, in which several people were killed.[51]

After the incident, Mockler, the British Consul-General at Baghdad, sought to visit Samarra in order to ensure the safety of British Indian students residing there.[52] Interestingly enough, it appears that the Ottoman authorities were much more disturbed by the Consul-General's visit British Consul-General than by the incident itself and tried in vain to prevent it.[53] Meanwhile, the Dragoman of the Russian Embassy called on the Ottoman foreign minister and alleged that the main reason for Mockler's journey to Samarra was to enable the chief *mujtahid* to escape to India. This inevitably reinforced the Porte's suspicions.[54] Furthermore, the Samarra incident caused much trouble among the Shiite population both in the Atabat and in Iran. Some of the Shiite *ulama* of Samarra forbade their followers to open their shops,

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51 For full details, see the three lengthy documents: FO 195/1841, Mockler to Currie, no. 210/23, Baghdad, 21 April 1894; FO 195/1841, no. 237/24, Mockler to Currie, Baghdad, 5 May 1894; and, BOA, Y.A. Hus. 296/39, 4 Zilkade 1311–9 May 1894.

52 See, especially, FO 195/1841, no. 210/23.

53 See FO 195/1841, no. 237/24, Mockler to Currie, Baghdad, 5 May 1894; BOA, Y.A. Hus. 295/40, 22 Şevval 1311–28 April 1894; Y.A. Hus. 295/77, 26 Şevval 1311–2 May 1894; Y.A. Hus. 295/89, 27 Şevval 1311–3 May 1894; Y.A. Hus. 296/9, Gurre-i Zilkade 1311–6 May 1894; Y.A. Hus. 301/27, 22 Zilhicce 1311–26 June 1894.

54 See BOA, Y.A. Hus. 296/39, 4 Zilkade 1311–9 May 1894; Y.A. Hus. 296/9, 24 Nisan 1310–6 May 1894; FO 195/1841, no. 242/25, Mockler to Currie, Baghdad, 9 May 1894.

and stopped leading prayers as a protest,[55] but eventually Mirza Hasan Shirazi issued an appeal for calm.[56]

In his instructions to the Grand Vizier, Cevad Paşa, Abdülhamid blamed the local authorities for their imprudence and pointed out that foreign consuls had intervened because foreign citizens had been among those involved in the incident. He expressed particular concern that the British might attempt to take the chief *mujtahid* under their protection. He therefore ordered that a special commission, composed of officials familiar with the region, should investigate the situation in consultation with the Vali of Baghdad.[57] Cevad Paşa replied that measures must be taken "to prevent the expansion of the Shiite sect in Iraq," and hinted at educational and financial reforms.[58]

At the same time, Abdülhamid asked Ali Galib Bey, the Ottoman Ambassador in Tehran,[59] for his views on the Samarra incident,

55 Ibid., and FO 195/1841, no. 281/33, Mockler to Currie, Baghdad, 23 May 1894. The Samarra incident appears to have caused great resentment among the Shiites of Iraq. This is also visible in a petition signed by a group of Shiite Muslims of Iraq to Sir Philip Currie, the British Ambassador at Istanbul, asking that the protection of the Embassy be extended to the petitioners. Although no answer was given to them, the Ambassador seems to have made some enquiries. He noted: "I am informed privately that the Shiitetes in Iraq are very numerous, and consider England as their friend." FO 424/183, Currie to Salisbury, no. 472 confidential, 16 July 1895. For other examples, BOA, Y.A. Hus. 299/76, 7 Zilhicce 1311–11 June 1894; Y.A. Hus. 299/77, 2 Zilhicce 1311–6 June 1894; Y.A. Hus. 301/7, 21 Zilhicce 1311–25 June 1894.

56 Mirza Hasan Shirazi issued an "ukase" to the inhabitants of the Shiite towns in Iraq, probably in May 1894, with reference to the recent disturbances at Samarra and the excitement they had aroused in various places. Meanwhile, the Shah of Iran asked for the punishment of those involved in the incident, while the Ottomans demanded the deportation of the Iranian Deputy-Consul in Samarra, who had caused so much trouble during the incident. FO 195/1841, 281/33, Mockler to Currie, 23 May 1894. For the text of the "ukase", see ibid., and Y.A. Hus. 301/27, 22 Zilhicce 1311–26 June 1894.

57 BOA, Irade-Hususi, no. 120, 1 Zilkade 1311–6 May 1894.

58 BOA, Y.A. Hus. 296/39, 4 Zilkade 1311–9 May 1894.

59 For Ali Galib Bey, see N. Göyünç, "XIX. Yüzyılda Tahran'daki Temsilcilerimiz ve Türk-İran Münasebetlerine Etkileri," in *Atatürk Konferansları, V: 1971–1972*, Ankara: TTK, 1975, 277.

the *mujtahids* and Shiism in Iraq. The Ambassador replied as follows:[60]

> It is my humble opinion that the objective may be obtained by, for example, inculcating in the minds of the [local] and Iranian population the idea that the survival of the Shiite sect in Baghdad is not [the result], as is believed, of the influence of the Iranian state, but of the protection of His Imperial Majesty the Caliph; by, as far as possible, rendering ineffective the Iranian consuls' initiatives in matters pertaining to sect, and so strengthening the material and moral bonds of the Shiite ulama to the sacred office of the Great Caliphate; and in sum, by materially demonstrating to the subjects and ulama of Iran that they can derive no benefit from the Iranian state and its officials, and that on the contrary, it is adherence to the Ottoman Sultanate which is the cause of prosperity and salvation.

V

From 1905 onwards, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution once again brought the 'Shiite problem' to the attention of the Ottoman authorities. In September 1906 serious troubles broke out at Karbala between Iranian subjects and the local Ottoman authorities when the latter renewed their efforts to exact payment of certain taxes from Iranian subjects; some five hundred Iranians went to the British Vice-Consulate at Karbala and set up camp in the adjacent streets.[61] The demonstration continued over several days, and the number of people taking part gradually increased.[62] To complicate matters, a misunderstanding occurred between the Vali of Baghdad and the Porte over how to handle the disturbances.[63] In spite of instructions not to use coercive measures

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60 BOA, YEE, 14/1623/126/10, 11 Safer 1312–14 August 1894.

61 FO 424/210, no. 83, Barclay to Grey, no. 670, Therapia, 20 September 1906.

62 FO 424/210, no. 86, Barclay to Grey, no. 198 telegraphic, Constantinople, 12 October 1906; for details, ibid., no. 89, 13 October 1906, and no. 90, 18 October 1906.

63 FO 424/210, inclosure in no. 96, Ramsay to Barclay, telegraphic, Baghdad, 14 October 1906.

against the demonstrators, the Vali, Mecid Bey, employed soldiers and gendarmes to disperse the crowd: guns were fired in the air, a great panic ensued, and several people were killed.[64] Before long, the Vali was dismissed under the pressure of British protests.

Even before this incident, in July 1906, the Porte's renewed attention to the Shiite problem was apparent in an interior ministry report on "measures needed for the strengthening of Sunni belief in Iraq." This appears to have led to a fresh discussion at the Council of Ministers and a partial shift in policy.[65] In November Abdülhamid established a commission under Hacı Akif Paşa, the head of military supplies, to examine the available reports and correspondence on Iraq, and to determine which measures should be taken to reform the region. Among many other matters, including administrative, financial and agricultural reform, the commission stressed the need to "prepare and perfect ways and means to prevent the expansion of Shiism and to protect the remaining Sunnis in that region," and in its final report, submitted in May 1907, the commission devoted a whole chapter to the Shiite problem.[66]

Generally speaking, this echoed the reports composed in the 1890s. The Oudh Bequest (and especially its distribution by the British Consul-General) remained a major concern, as did the state of the Sixth Army, in which a majority of soldiers remained Shiite. It appears from the report that almost nothing had been done to solve these problems, but the commission's own placed the greatest emphasis on education:[67]

> Just as it would be unwise to neglect sectarian affairs, which are the sole means of preserving [Iraq], so it will not suffice simply to appoint and decorate a few muftis

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64 FO 424/210, no. 98, Barclay to Grey, no. 204 telegraphic, Constantinople, 29 October 1906; ibid., no. 99, 29 October 1906; for details, ibid., no. 103, Barclay to Grey, no. 731, Constantinople, 30 October 1906; ibid., no. 113, 9 November 1906; ibid., no. 114, 13 November 1906.

65 BOA, BEO, no. 272681, Dahiliye Nezareti, 21 Haziran 1322–4 July 1906.

66 BOA, Y.A. Res. 147/106, 26 Cemaziyelevvel 1325–7 July 1907. The Commission included Sayyid Talib Paşa, the son of the Naqib of Basra.

67 Ibid.

and religious scholars, and it is essential to establish a most effective foundation in this matter. First of all, necessary funds must be found to reform the primary schools and the madrasas, so that the former may serve as initiators of religious learning, and the latter as its perfectors. In order that religious education in Iraq may be brought into accordance with political necessities, that is, with the preservation of the [Sunni] sect, a number of persons should be sent out by the *Şeyhülislam*'s department, in order that, in unity with the local government, they may study and report on means to achieve the desired end: for example, temporary funds to repair and reform existing madrasas, and to set up requisite new schools and madrasas; permanent allowances to support students and teachers; the appointment of influential and effective *müftü*s in important places.

At the same time, the commission warned that education was not enough. The material well-being of the population was also important:[68]

For there can be no greater proof that mankind cannot be turned away from a law of nature such as is self-interest, than the fact that almost all the people of a country, which was once the birthplace of the Hanafi sect, have been converted to Shiism through the material seductions of the Iranians and the English. Therefore, since preaching and exhortation will scarcely suffice to save the order of the country from its chronic internal sickness, it is above all essential to pay attention to the population's material interests, and this depends upon securing benefits by stopping damage [caused by] the Iraqi rivers, and upon giving the population a right to exploit the land.

Practically, the commission proposed urgent real material development in the region, in the shape of irrigation works and distribution of state lands. As a result, a fresh reform commission was set up by the Sultan, under Mustafa Nâzım Paşa, and sent to Iraq in September 1907. One of the instructions given to the commission was as follows:[69]

In order to reduce and limit the spread of the Shiite and Wahhabi sects, and to hinder the effects of foreign suggestions and insinuations, recourse will be had to necessary measures immediately. At the same time, investigation and observations in this respect will be submitted [to the Porte], and necessary measures for public order and security will be taken in accordance with the Porte's authorization.

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68 Ibid.
69 BOA, Y. A. Res. 147/106 (6), 7 Rebiyülâhir 1325–20 May 1907.

Meanwhile Ebubekir Hâzim Bey, the Vali of Baghdad, had also warned the Porte against Shiite activity in the region. When the Grand Vizier forwarded this warning to the education ministry, it consulted Âlusizâde Ahmed Şakir Efendi, a prominent notable of Baghdad, and a member of the Sublime Council of Education *(Meclis-i Maarif-i Kebir)* at Istanbul, who himself had once worked in Iraq against Shiism.[70] In his report, Ahmed Şakir Efendi argued that the Shiite problem in Iraq was political rather than religious. Shiite *ulama (akhunds)*, sent to Iraq by wealthy Iranians, were wandering among the tribes and preaching, and as these tribal people were unaware of the basic principles of Islam they were easily converted to the Shiite sect. He warned that the Porte's previous attempts to solve the problem by, for example, sending *ulama* to the region had been a waste of money and accomplished nothing. If Shiism continued to spread, it would give rise to political dangers, as the growing numbers of Shiites could become a vehicle for the designs of both Iran and Britain on Iraq.[71]

Ahmed Şakir Efendi proposed some measures. First, a commission should be formed by the ulama of Baghdad, and a number of preachers should be selected among local *ulama* and sent to the tribes. Second, these preachers and *hodjas* should make regular reports to the local government officials on the state of affairs in their region. Third, in order to turn out capable *ulama*, the *madrasas*, and the education they furnished, should be reformed, and the best available students should be selected by the above-mentioned *ulama* commission and sent to Najaf and Karbala. Ahmed Şakir emphasized that these special measures were essential, but at the same time he urged a general reform of education in Iraq. Better primary and secondary schooling was needed to keep Sunnism strong in the region. In addition, as at Bursa and Salonica, an Agricultural School should be established. The ban on Sunni-Shiite marriages should be preserved, Shiite *akhunds* should be prevented from

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70 See Albayrak, *Son Devir Osmanlı Uleması*, I, 221–2; A. Azzavi, "Âlusi," *İslam-Türk Ansiklopedisi* I, Istanbul, 1941, 334–7.
71   BOA, YEE 14/257/126/8, 13 Ağustos 1323–26 August 1907.

wandering about the country, and the Shiite religious festivals should be strictly controlled by the local authorities.[72]

In January 1908 Mustafa Nâzım Paşa, the president of the reform commission, telegraphed the results of its investigations to the government.[73] It concluded that four factors had been helping to create the Shiite problem. (1) The Shiite *mujtahids*, who had political aims, exerted an influence on the ignorant people and tribes. (2) While Sunni establishments in the *vilayet* were in a state of decay, the Shiite establishments in Karbala, Najaf, Samarra and Kazimayn were in perfect condition, and easily attracted the population. (3) The Shiite ulama *(akhunds)* were wandering among the tribes and propagating the Shiite sect. (4) While *mujtahids* were helping the poor by means of donations from foreign, Shiite-populated countries, and five to six thousand Shiite religious students were being educated in excellent conditions, the Sunni *madrasas* were filled with army deserters. Even if two or three hundred Sunni students might be seriously pursuing religious education, they were living in a state of extreme poverty.[74]

The report noted that the Baghdad provincial government had advised the commission to increase the number of primary schools, but it questioned whether this measure would suffice. The commission put forward eight proposals of its own. First, the number of primary schools in the *vilayet* should be increased, with the recruitment of capable teachers on adequate pay. Second, *madrasa* teachers should be paid higher salaries and *madrasa* students given sufficient means for their keep, so that religious education might become respectable again. Third, the *madrasa* examinations should be reformed so as to incompetent students. Fourth, an impartial *ulama* commission, appointed by the reform commission, should introduce tests to weed out incompetent *madrasa* teachers. Fifth, to counter the *mujtahids* of Karbala and Najaf, a *tekke* funded out of local *waqf* revenues should be established in Karbala along the lines of the one of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Gaylani in Baghdad. Sixth,

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72 Ibid.
73 BOA, BEO, no. 272681, 10 Kanun-ı sâni 1323–23 January 1908.
74 Ibid.

akhunds should be prevented from travelling around among the tribes. Seventh, *ulama* posts in the region should be reserved for capable local men, and no longer be given to outsiders with no knowledge of the region. Eighth, some *ulama* and *hodjas* should be appointed to the Sixth Army to teach and preach according to Sunni principles *(akaid-i ehl-i sünnet).*[75]

From 1885 onwards, the substantial Shiite population in the *vilayet*s of Baghdad and Basra began to give serious concern to the Ottoman authorities, chiefly, it appears, because they saw it as a natural ally of Iran in any future conflict. The extent of this concern was bound up with the general state of relations between Iran and the Ottoman Empire: the more relations deteriorated in other areas, the more the Porte showed concern over the Shiite population of Iraq. In the early 1890s, this led the Sultan to launch his 'pan-Islamic' initiative for Sunni-Shiite union, though with little success.[76] Otherwise, Ottoman officials seemed to take a naive view of the causes and remedies of the 'problem', on the assumption that through preaching and education they would easily be able to 'convert' people from their 'superstitious beliefs'. From the early 1900s, however, the Ottoman authorities grew increasingly worried, as internal developments in Iran began to show their effects at the Atabat. At all events, no 'solution' was ever found.

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75 Ibid.
76 For details, see G. Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890–1908*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Manchester, 1994, 222–80.

Hans-Lukas Kieser

The Anatolian Alevis' Ambivalent Encounter with Modernity in Late Ottoman and Early Republican Turkey

This paper deals with the Anatolian Alevis, an important heterodox, in some ways Shiite minority estimated to number up to a quarter of Turkey's population.[1] It studies a little known example of how religion and social change were connected in the "modernization" of a land which, as home of the Caliph, used to be the centre of the Muslim world. Islamization and Turkification – in this somewhat paradoxical linkage – were the major processes of social and demographic change in Asia Minor during the twentieth century. They resulted from policies that impacted first of all on the Anatolian Christians but also on the "heterodox" people which the Alevis were and still are. In abolishing the Caliphate and shifting from a Muslim to a secular Turkish nationalism, the Kemalist movement won over after 1924 many Alevis who had suffered persecution and marginalization as a minority within the Ottoman Empire. But, contrary to the professedly egalitarian, supra-religious idea of the Republic founded in 1923, the Sunni Muslim Turks continued to dominate national and regional power relations, also in terms of culture and identity. This made life difficult particularly for the Eastern, mostly Kurdish-speaking Alevis, who will receive most of the attention in this paper.

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1   Official data are not available.

The onset of modernity among Anatolian Alevis[2]

The Anatolian Alevis are a large religious minority living among the Sunni majority in present-day Turkey. They already formed the most important non-Sunni Islamic group in Ottoman Asia Minor, but being nominally Muslim they were not grouped among the recognized non-Muslim communities *(millet)* such as the Christians and the Jews. American missionaries, who were the first Westerners to be in contact with them in the 1850s, described them as "the most abused people", considered by Sunni Turks and Kurds as "worthless heretics, and not worth caring for", thus more oppressed by the "dominant race" than "any class of the Christian subjects".[3]

"Alevi" is in fact a term used for a number of different groups, whose common characteristics are adoration of Ali, the fourth caliph, refusal of the Sharia, an almost exclusively oral tradition, and a long history of marginalization under the Sultans after 1500. Alevism was largely a rural phenomenon.

In the twentieth century, migration, urbanization and a certain Westernization were the principal factors of change for the Alevis. The "West" was not only welcomed on a technological or ideological level; it also early affected ideas of political, social and individual life among many Alevis. An ambivalent attitude to the authorities – still ultimately seen in the old tradition as *Yezid*,[4] "Prince of this world" – generally persevered despite the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924. This was particularly true of the Eastern Alevis, made up partly of (Kurdish) Kurmandji

2   For more detailed information on the Alevis' encounter with Ottoman reforms and the missionaries' "Protestant modernity" see my "Muslim Heterodoxy and Protestant Utopia. The Interactions Between Alevis and Missionaries in Ottoman Anatolia", *Die Welt des Islams* 41/1 (2001), 89–111, and *Der verpasste Friede,* 69–79 and 167–170.

3   Letter of George Nutting, Arabkir, 24.10.1854, ABC 16.7.1 (Archives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Houghton Library, Harvard); Sanford Richardson, Arabkir, in *Missionary Herald* 1856, pp. 295–98.

4   Yazid I. ibn Muʻawiya, sixth caliph (680–83), considered as responsible for the tragedy of Karbala (680).

and Zaza speakers. As non-Turks and non-Sunnis they experienced twofold exclusion from a state traditionally based on Sunnism and, since 1923 (but already beginning in 1913), on Turkishness. The strong orientation towards the West was an interesting element of continuity among Alevis (or Kızılbaş[5]) throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It began with the Eastern Kızılbaş movement towards Protestantism in the mid-nineteenth century (a phenomenon which, not to be confused with pietist conversion, involved a hopeful turning on their part to the "Puritan modernity" of the American missionaries); it resulted in the great expectations of President Wilson's idea of self-determination in the context of World War One, in the turn to socialism in the 1960s, and finally in an unrestricted approval of Turkey's ambition to join the European Union.

The multi-ethnic Eastern Alevis were and are a minority in comparison with the mostly Turkish Alevis of Anatolia, who have been affiliated with the Bektaşiye since the 16th century.[6] Too often, Bektaşi-led Western Alevis are taken as a general model of Anatolian Alevism. But, for the purposes of historical understanding, it may be helpful to focus more on an Alevism not fashioned by the Bektaşiye. International research in the last two decades has been concerned mostly with the Western Alevis,[7] and research in Turkey before the 1990s, beginning with the scholars affiliated to the *Comité Union et Progrès* (CUP) eighty years ago, dealt exclusively with Western Alevis. The idea of "Aleviness" as genuine Turkishness developed in that context and corresponded to the ethnic-nationalist need for ancient origins.[8]

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5   As they were normally called before 1900. This term refers only to the rural Alevis, especially the Eastern Alevis, not to the Bektashis.

6   For this distinction see my "Die Aleviten im Wandel der Neuzeit", in: M. Tamcke (ed.), *Orient am Scheideweg,* Hamburg: Dr. Kovac, 2003, 35–61.

7   See the substantial chapter on Alevis in the Republic of Turkey in D. Shankland, *Islam and Society in Turkey*, Huntingdon: Eothen, 1999, 132–168, where he complains of this lack (135).

8   Cf. notably F. Köprülü, "Bemerkungen zur Religionsgeschichte Kleinasiens", *Mitteilungen zur Osmanischen Geschichte* 1 (1922), 215; B. Sait Bey, "Türkiye'de Alevi Zümreleri", *Türk Yurdu,* September, followed in October and November 1926 (in the new transliterated edition, Ankara: Tutibay, 2001: vol. 11, 105–12, 163–78, 201–8).

Whether or not the *dede* (hereditary religious guide) is affiliated with the Bektashiye is the main feature distinguishing what I call "Western" and "Eastern" Alevism – a distinction that can be traced back to the sixteenth century. Eastern Alevis do not have a common organizational roof; different *dede* lineages exist independently of one another. However, the Dersim region between Erzincan and Elazığ – which enjoyed an age-old autonomy from the Ottoman state and an undisputed influence of its *dedes*, called *Seyit* – became somewhat like a centre of Alevism.[9] *Dedes* generally are said to be descendants of the Prophet's family through his son-in-law Ali: this is the meaning of the term *"Seyit"*. The title of privilege *(berat)* or the genealogical tree *(secere)* by which Eastern Alevi *dedes* claim written legitimacy comes not from the Bektaşi order but from spiritual centres such as Erdebil, Karbala and Mashhad. In some cases, they also probably obtained titles of privilege from Ottoman religious officials *(nakibüleşraf)*.[10]

From their beginnings in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Reforms (Tanzimat) were ambivalent for Alevis and other Ottoman groups that had been hoping for fundamental improvements in their status. The interdiction of the Bektashiye in 1826, the official explanation of this interdiction and the appointment of members of the Naqshbendi order in the Bektaşi organization soon demonstrated that, despite the European-sounding declarations of equality and progress, a reactive, defensive, Sunnitizing restoration was intrinsic to the Tanzimat project. In fact, the proclaimed religious liberty was realized only very partially in the eastern provinces.

The Alevis' confidence in their *dede*-dominated social and religious system was first shaken in the second half of the nineteenth century. Missionaries, above all American, penetrated the countryside and built prestigious schools and hospitals in the Anatolian provinces, to explain

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 9 Cf. Trowbridge, Stephen van Rensselaer, "The Alevis, or Deifiers of Ali", *Harvard Theological Review* 2 (1909), 343 and 345.

10 For concrete insights into the region of Adıyaman, see Neubauer, Anna, *Dede'ye ziyaret (Visite au dede). La figure du dede chez les Alévis de la région d'Adıyaman, Turquie*, master thesis (unpublished), University of Neuchâtel, 2001, 61–62.

God and the world to the local population. They made a deep impression, especially on non- Sunnis, and although the Ottoman authorities immediately repressed the move towards Protestantism it had a strong and lasting symbolic impact. In the same period the Armenian educational renaissance took place, and the Ottoman state implemented its policies of centralizing and modernizing the civil service, the army, education and health, though with uneven success in the Eastern provinces. Under Sultan Abdülhamit II these endeavours were closely related to a pan-Islamic policy that escalated into the large-scale anti-Armenian pogroms of the 1890s.

The sultan was more effective than any reformist before him in translating the ideas of centralization and modernization into practice. He worked actively to integrate the Alevis and other heterodox groups such as the Yazidis into the traditionally state-supporting *ümmet* (Muslim community) – and therefore, by implication, to Sunnitize them. He partly succeeded in reintegrating the Sunni Kurds by giving numerous tribes the status of privileged cavalry units, the so-called *Hamidiye*. Abdülhamit also founded an elite school for sons of tribal chiefs (the *Mekteb-i Aşiret*), and sent out his own Hanefi missionaries to teach orthodoxy to the numerous heterodox people and to mobilize provincial Muslims behind his policies. An important destructive aspect of developments in the region was that the Protestant and Ottoman (especially Hamidian) models of modernity clashed with each other and could not produce a creative synergy. The Alevis generally took the side of the Protestants, and they were not involved in the anti-Armenian massacres of 1895–96, perpetrated mostly by local Sunnis.

The Alevis had a mixed reaction to the state-led reforms, welcoming the Tanzimat proclamation of equality but fearing the state's tighter control and its demand for taxes and soldiers. They naturally distrusted Abdülhamit 's re-instatement of the Caliphate and suffered under the *Hamidiye* militias. In part, however, they gained from the expropriation of many Armenians during the pogroms, even if they themselves did not participate in the slaughter. Some Dersim chiefs also sent their sons to the *Mekteb-i Aşiret*. But the request of some Alevi tribes to be

recognized as *Hamidiye* was declined with the argument that only Sunnis could be accepted.[11]

The Young Turks' right-wing modernism:
From Muslim nationalism to Turkism

Many Alevis enthusiastically welcomed the Young Turk revolution of 1908 but had their hopes dashed five years later when an anti-liberal single-party dictatorship was installed that made use of Islamic propaganda. Thus, what we have said with regard to the second half of the nineteenth century is in essence also true for the decade of Young Turk rule (1908–18). There is an importance difference, however: for the first time since the Kızılbaş revolts in the sixteenth century, the watershed of 1908 briefly led the Alevis to an open and collective reaffirmation of their identity. Emulating their Armenian neighbours they even engaged in the establishment of village schools.[12]

In the biased view of the fervent Turkish nationalist Riza Nur, the fact that the "Kızılbaş Turks" (the Alevis) were then emphasizing a separate identity from that of the Sunnis was the result of "mendacious Armenian propaganda" during the Hamidian era.[13] The later Kemalist Hasan Reşid Tankut, who in 1914 had been a young official in the province of Sivas, retrospectively described the Christian mission schools in Mamuretülaziz as "nothing other than stations set up to convey propa-

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11 M. M. Sunar, "Doğu Anadolu ve Kuzey Irakt'ta Osmanlı Devleti ve Aşiretler: II. Abdülhamid'den II. Mesrutiyet'e", *Kebikeç* 10 (2000), 123; S. Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains. Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire. 1876–1909,* London: I. B. Tauris, 1998, 68–111.

12 G. E. White, "The Alevi Turks of Asia Minor", *Contemporary Review* 104, 698.

13 R. Nur, *Hayat ve Hatiratim,* vol. 3: Rıza Nur-Atatürk Kavgası, Istanbul: İşaret, 1992, 112.

ganda filled with hope [of change] to the Dersim".[14] The Kurdish Alevi
writer Mehmed Nuri Dersimi, on the other hand, who went to high
school in Mamuretülaziz before World War One, underlined the posi-
tive, modernizing and enlightening impact of those same institutions.[15]

The clash of different models of identity, reform and modernity is
particularly evident in the international reform plan for the Eastern
Provinces. This – in its final form – masterpiece of pluralist balancing,
which was a thorn in the side of the CUP's bid for unrestricted sover-
eignty over Asia Minor, was signed by the regime under international
pressure on 8 February 1914. In applying the reforms, the aforemen-
tioned Hasan Reşid Tankut claimed that the Alevis would have voted
side by side with the Armenians in the planned elections, and that this
might have led to comprehensive reorganization of the Eastern Prov-
inces. The Alevis and Armenians, hitherto isolated or clearly in the
minority, would immediately have had a decisive influence on not only
the economic and cultural life but also the politics of those regions.[16]

After the Balkan wars (1912/13) the CUP, which had established
its dictatorial regime at the beginning of 1913, engaged in a holistic set
of ethnic policies for the "national" homogenization of Asia Minor.
These may be interpreted in one sense as a continuation of Abdülhamit's
religious policies, but they bore the modernist imprint of secular eth-
nic-nationalist thinking. They began with the Turkish-Bulgarian popu-
lation transfer (November 1913), continued with the disguised and
illegal expulsion of Ottoman citizens of Greek Orthodox faith from

14 H.R. Tankut, "Zazalar Hakkında Sosyolojik Tetkiler", in M. Bayrak (ed.)*, Açık-
    Gizli/Resmi-Gayrıresmi Kürdoloji Belgeleri*, Ankara: Özge, 1994, 472.

15 M.N. Dersimi, *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim*, Aleppo, 1952, 45. See my
    piece "'Garib ellerde ve bî-kestim': l'exil chez Nuri Dersimi (1892–1973)", in
    H. Bozarslan and F. Georgeon (eds), *Ghurba/gurbet, Variations autour de l'exil*,
    forthcoming.

16 H.R. Tankut, "Doğu ve Güneydoğu Bölgesi Üzerine Etno-Politik Bir İnceleme", in
    M. Bayrak (ed.), *Açık-Gizli/ Resmi-Gayrıresmi Kürdoloji Belgeleri,* Ankara: Özge,
    1994, 219; R.H. Davison, *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774–1923. The
    Impact of the West,* Austin, 1990, 196.

the Aegean coast (early 1914),[17] and evolved into a huge experiment in social-ethnic "engineering" during World War One. The main objectives of this drive were to expel the Greek, Armenian and (to some extent) Assyrian Christians, to settle Muslim refugees from the Balkans and the Caucasus in their place, to force the nomads into a more fixed way of life, and to scatter the Kurds and Arabs throughout Anatolia.[18] The Alevis were not affected as such, therefore. Kurds, Arabs and other non-Turkish Muslims – unlike the Christians – were seen as groups that could be assimilated, if necessary by coercion, to the newly emerging Turkish nation. The Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 officially recognized the "ethnic cleansing" which, for the sake of undisputed Turkish rule in Asia Minor, had taken place during the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1922).

In March 1916 a collection of Dersim Alevi tribes occupied and destroyed the towns of Nazimiye, Mazgirt, Pertek and Çarsancak and marched towards Mamuretülaziz. But the government army, with a large contingent of troops that included many Shafi'i Kurds, succeeded in crushing this Kurdish Alevi revolt. Missionaries in Harput heard officials say that they did not want a single (Alevi) Kurd left in the region; they wanted to deport them all like the Armenians. And, indeed, a caravan later appeared in Harput with about two thousand men, women and children from the former rebellious tribes, who were treated just as badly as the Armenians a year before, except that the men were not separated out and killed. The following morning, however, the column was allowed to retrace its steps, the explanation at the time being that the tribes of Dersim, in a rare display of unity, had told the gover-

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17 Celal (Bayar), head of the CUP branch in Smyrna and later prime minister of the Republic, played an important role there. See E. Sensekerci, *Türk devriminde Celal Bayar, 1918–1960*, Istanbul: Alfa, 2000, 35–37; C. Bayar, *Ben de yazdım,* vol. 5, Istanbul, 1965–67, 1573. Cf. N. M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-century Europe,* Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2001, 43; S. P. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities. Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey,* New York: Macmillan, 1932, 18–23.

18 Cf. F. Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları İskan Politikası (1913–18),* Istanbul: İletişim, 2001.

nor they would burn Harput to the ground if orders were not immediately given for the return of the deportees.[19] Further research should show the extent to which this deportation was not only a punitive measure but already part of a systematic ethnopolitics that continued against the Kurdish Alevis after the revolt of Koçkiri (1921) and acquired special intensity in the 1930s.

In order to rectify their paucity of ethnological and sociological knowledge concerning Asia Minor, which they claimed as the Turkish national homeland, the CUP sent some representatives during World War One to carry out investigations in the interior of Anatolia.[20] Esat Uras was given the task of collecting information about the Armenians, while Baha Sait Bey was instructed to research Alevism-Bektashism. According to Sait, his commission was triggered by a startling population statistic compiled by Protestant missionaries and confiscated from the Anatolia College, which listed the Alevis as a former Christian grouping. Deeming it necessary to oppose such "separatist ideas", the CUP elite instructed Sait to develop and disseminate an effective challenge.[21]

The political aim of Sait's investigation was to represent the Alevis as "real old Turks". The CUP's discovery and enhancement of the Alevis did not serve to foster religious pluralism in Anatolia or the adoption of Alevism as a national religion; it was concerned with assimilating Alevism into an ethnic-national body of thought. All of us, Sunnis and Alevis, are Turks from the race of Oğuz: such, in essence, was Baha Sait's message.[22] Most of the Alevis in the eastern provinces felt threat-

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19 H. H. Riggs, *Days of Tragedy in Armenia. Personal Experiences in Harpoot, 1915–1917*, Michigan: Gomidas Institute, 1997, 184.

20 F. Dündar, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Etnisite Araştırmaları", *Toplumsal Tarih* (2001), 43–50.

21 The palace interpreted this action as "Kızılbaş propaganda" and prevented publication of the results in the *Türk Yurdu* (published only in 1926, see Baha, "Alevi"). The *Türk Yurdu* was the organ of the pan-Turkish club "Turkish Hearth" *(Türk Ocağı)* that was closely connected to the CUP (in the eyes of devout Muslims it subscribed to ungodly beliefs). Cf. N. Birdoğan, *İttihat-Terakki'nin Alevilik Bektaşilik Araştırması (Baha Sait Bey),* Istanbul / Berlin, 1994, 11.

22 B. Sait, "Alevi", 105–06.

ened by this Young Turk viewpoint: "*Istemeyiz moğolları*", "We don't want the Mongols", shouted Alişer, a militant Kurdish Alevi, in a clear identification of Oğuz and Mongols.[23]

The Alevis were also disconcerted by the enhanced status the Muslim community *(ümmet)* received after the Şeyhülislam declared *jihad* on 14 November 1914. Nevertheless, the Balaban tribe in the Erzincan region is an example of how Zaza-speaking Alevis could partly be used by the CUP for its purposes. Recently published correspondence between the Balaban chieftain Gül Agha and local representatives of the CUP make it probable, when this is set alongside eyewitness accounts, that some Balabans took part in massacres of Armenians organized in 1915 by the CUP's secret organization, *Teşkilat-i Mahsûsa*.[24] Most Eastern Alevis, however, succeeded in fleeing military service and rejected Bektaşi leader Cemaleddin Çelebi's call for them to join the army.[25]

The extermination of the Armenians in 1915–16 was a dramatic event linked to the specific phenomenon of right-wing modernism in a Turkey on the turn between "old" and "new". It was a traumatic experience for most of the Eastern Alevis, who lived for many years in fear of suffering the same fate as the Armenians. This was true even if, materially, they benefited from the eviction of their neighbours. A case in point is the province of Erzincan, where Zaza-speaking Alevis from the Dersim had already begun settling in the nineteenth century and lived, for the most time peacefully, side by side with the indigenous Christians, who had better fields, a developed infrastructure, and more advanced know-how in agriculture and trade. The expulsion of these Christians during World War I gave the Alevis an opportunity to improve their situation. Such facts go some way to explain the condi-

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23 Turkist race ideology denied such origins, because the Mongols were depreciated as a yellow race. Alişer's poem is cited in Dersimi, *Dersim*, 155.

24 V. Özgül, "İttihat Terakki ve Balaban Aşireti. Bazı Belgerler Işığında İttihatçıların Aşiret Çalışmaları", *Toplumsal Tarih* (2001), 38–42; Dersimi, *Dersim*, 68, and J. Lepsius, *Deutschland und Armenien 1914–1918,* Potsdam, 1919, 86 and 94.

25 Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, DH.ŞFR 54-A/354; Dersimi, *Dersim*, 94–98, 115, 118, 280, 291.

tional support that Eastern Alevis there gave to Mustafa Kemal, since his movement was seen as being able to guarantee the status quo. On the other hand, many Alevis had strong reasons to mistrust Pasha's re-organization of the CUP power network; they became the first "internal enemies" openly to oppose him, in the revolt of Koçkiri-Dersim.[26]

At the end of 1919 Alişer, chief promoter of the Kurdish Alevi autonomy movement of Koçkiri-Dersim, declared himself an inspector of the Caliph's army – a very surprising step for an Alevi, but understandable as a show of loyalty towards the liberal government in Istanbul – and in this capacity called upon the tribes to resist Mustafa Kemal's unitary national movement. President Wilson's principle of self-determination was an important element in his Kurdist rhetoric. Around the same time, Mustafa Kemal made a pilgrimage to Hacıbektaş in order to win over the chief of the Western Alevis, Ahmed Cemaleddin Çelebi Efendi, who had already cooperated with Enver and Talat during World War I. He succeeded and, after the establishment of the Ankara government, made Cemaleddin for a short time the second vice-president of the parliament in Ankara.[27]

A year later, in October 1921, the Koçkiri rebellion and its bloody suppression became a hotly debated issue in the National Assembly. In the end, it accepted the plan of a specially appointed commission for an autonomous Turkish Kurdistan with a regional parliament and Kurdish schools.[28] However, after its triumph in Lausanne in 1923, the regime set aside the decision of the National Assembly.

Modern Kurdish claims for self-determination and the anti-centralist, anti-CUP and anti-Sunni stance of Eastern Alevis were closely linked in this first significant clash with the Kemalist movement in

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26   Baki Öz and other Kemalist Alevi authors are wrong on this point (see B. Öz, *Kurtuluş Savaşında Alevi-Bektaşiler,* Istanbul: Yenigün Haber Ajansı, 1997, 98).

27   R. Akin, *TBMM Devleti (1920–1923). Birinci Meclis Döneminde Devlet Erkleri ve İdare*, Istanbul: İletişim, 2001, 67.

28   R. Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism 1880–1925,* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991, 39–41 and 166–168.

Koçkiri-Dersim.[29] Following Rıza Nur, then a high Turkish diplomat, agents of the rebellion conducted propaganda among the Alevis saying: "We are Shiites and are in revolt against the Sunnites. Join us!" Several Turkish-speaking Alevis did in fact join the rebels. The Turkish nationalist and member of the National Assembly Halis Turgut Bey tried to convince the Turkish-speaking Alevis of the region that they were Turks and should support the Turkish Nationalists.[30] But the word "Turk" in regional usage was very closely related to Sunni, that is, to the state-supporting dominant class (the *millet-i hâkime*).

Eastern Alevis in the Early Republic

The Erzincan Alevis were not prepared to pursue agriculture on the same high level as the Christians had done before them; field surveys show traces of terraced fields, irrigation systems, roads and even mills where there is now only pasture.[31] When speaking of their skilful predecessors, the village people (who retain vivid but very partial memories) display an apparent inferiority complex.[32] Compared with the previous century, the decades after World War One witnessed a regression in

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29 For a deeper analysis see my "Les Kurdes alévis et la question identitaire: le soulèvement du Koçkiri-Dersim (1919–21)", in M. van Bruinessen (ed.), *Islam des Kurdes*, Paris: INALCO-ERISM, 1998, 279–316 (= *Les Annales de l'autre Islam,* no. 5).

30 Nur, *Hayat*, p. 112.

31 I rely on my (unpublished) researches concerning the cantons *(ilçe)* of Pülümür (province of Tunceli) and Çağlayan (province of Erzincan).

32 Travellers' reports show that, as early as the 1930s, it was a commonplace in the provinces to say that the towns had declined since the destruction of the Christian communities and the slaughter of the Armenians. See E. J. Zürcher, "Two Young Ottomanists Discover Kemalist Turkey: The Travel Diaries of Robert Anhegger and Andreas Tietze", *Turkology Update Leiden Project Working Papers Archive,* Department of Turkish Studies, Leiden University, http://www.let. leidenuniv.nl/tcimo/tulp/Research/diaries.htm.

the economic and cultural life of the Eastern Anatolian towns and villages. Reality fell far short of the Young Turks' and Kemalists' rhetoric of civilization. Even remote towns of the region had experienced some features of a *belle époque* in the late Ottoman period,[33] most notably an educational renaissance among Eastern Anatolian Christians, but then they had sunk into a depression after the end of World War One. By means of large-scale military expenditure the single-party regime established and maintained its power in these eastern provinces. From the 1950s on, emigration became the only way out of an isolated and damaged world.

Even far outside the province of Dersim/Tunceli, life held no prospects in the Eastern Alevi villages. Subsistence farming was prevalent and the old commercial networks were in ruins. There were virtually no village schools in Eastern Anatolia until the 1960s, and so people generally remained illiterate. In rare cases, village schools were established in the 1920s or 1930s. The Turkish-speaking Mezirme, for example (today's Ballıkaya), in the canton of Hekimhan, province of Malatya, had been for centuries an important centre of Eastern Alevism from which *dedes* made annual tours through central Anatolia and as far as northern Syria. It had a *tekke* called Karadirek that was completely independent from the Bektaşiye. In 1926 a village school was established there along with a gendarmerie station. One of the first actions of the appointed teacher in the pay of the Republic was to bring about the destruction of the *tekke*.[34]

Outside the Dersim (renamed Tunceli in 1935) and especially in western Anatolia, a fresh republican idealism nevertheless motivated many Alevis during the years of one-party rule (1923–45). The aboli-

33 For this term in the late Ottoman context see, in general, F. Georgeon, *Abdülhamid II: le sultan calife (1876–1909),* Paris: Fayard, 2003, and, in particular, my piece "Alevilik as song and dialogue: The village sage Melûli Baba (1892–1989)", in D. Shankland (ed.), *Anthropology, Archaeology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia, or the life and times of F. W. Hasluck (1878–1920)*, Istanbul: Isis, 2004, vol. 1, 355–68.

34 I rely here on my (unpublished) researches, especially on information I was given by a retired teacher from the region.

tion of the Caliphate in 1924 had stirred sympathies for the new regime, as had the suppression of Sheyk Said's revolt in 1925, interpreted as a fanatical Sunni movement. The Kurdish Alevis who lived in Bingöl, Muş and Varto, notably the Hormek and Lolan tribes, had a long history of conflict with their Sunni Kurdish neighbours, so that when these joined Sheyk Said they threw in their lot with the Kemalist government.[35] Outside the Dersim, the Alevis tolerated without resistance the prohibition of the *tekkes* in 1926.

The Dersim region was the heart of Eastern Alevism and a well-known centre for Alevis in the area encompassing Asia Minor and Syria. In the progressivist view of the Kemalist elite, however, it was an anti-modernist, obscurantist, feudalist and reactionary region, or, to quote one high official, a "boil" that had to be lanced for the salvation of the country.[36] This "operation" took place in the form of a military campaign against the Dersim in 1937–38; its emblematic figure was Turkey's first woman pilot Sabiha Gökçen, Atatürk's adopted child, who carried out bombing raids on Dersim villages.

Despite propaganda about the "civilizing" purpose of the Dersim campaign, at a deeper level old enemy-images and concepts were actually being reshaped in secular terms. Around 1935, a secret report of the (military) Gendarmerie Command gave the following ethnic-religious formulation of the "Dersim problem": "The worst aspect of Alevism, and one that deserves analysis, is the deep abyss separating them from Turkdom. This abyss is the Kızılbaş religion. The Kızılbaş do not like the Sunni Muslims, they bear them a grudge, they are their archenemies. They call the Sunnis 'Rumi'. The Kızılbaş believe that divine power is embodied in [human] carriers, and that their imams have been tortured to death at the hands of the Sunnis. Therefore they bear the Sunnis enmity. This has gone so far that for the Kızılbaş, Turk and Sunni are the same, as are the names of Kurd and Kızılbaş [in

35 M. Ş. Fırat, *Doğu İlleri ve Varto Tarihi,* Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1983 [1952], 161–198.

36 Hamdi Bey, Inspector of the Civil Services, 1926, cited in İ. Beşikçi, *Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi,* Ankara: Yurt, 1992, 50–51.

Dersim]."[37] To a large extent, Young Turks and Kemalists saw religion as a given element of ethnic identity. Thus the only solution to the state's conflict with the Dersim Alevis was "a radical elimination of the Dersim problem through a general cleansing operation" by the army, as Prime Minister Celal Bayar put it on 29 June 1938 in the National Assembly.[38]

Leading figures in Zaza-speaking Alevi villages around the Dersim, who strictly had nothing to do with the revolt, were arrested and killed by the military gendarmerie in the late summer of 1938 because of their relations with Dersim tribes. A similar fate lay in store for Dersimis who did not participate in the struggle. Many survivors were deported to various parts of western Anatolia. On 6 August 1938 the Council of Ministers ordered the depopulation of various regions of the Dersim (those of the Kalan, Demenan, Koç and Şam tribes, between Çemişgezek and Erzincan) and the deportation of 5000–7000 people;[39] it declared them Grade 3 prohibited areas, the highest level under the Law of Re-settlement *(İskan Kanunu)* of 1934. (Grade 2 defined areas where people had to be deported in order to assimilate them into Turkdom, and Grade 1 areas where the number of Turks was targeted to increase.) Forced deportation of Dersimis had already been organized after the campaign in 1937.

Robert Anhegger and Andreas Tietze, two scholars from Vienna who travelled at that time in western Anatolia (eastern Anatolia was hermetically closed), saw in September 1937 at the Afyon-Karahisar railway station numbers of deported Kurds being "loaded and unloaded like cattle by the officials". In the ruins of a mosque in Aydin, Anhegger and Tietze again saw completely impoverished Kurds from Tunceli who were receiving no care or attention. They were "simply removed there

37 Jandarma Umum Kumandanlığı, *Dersim*, [Gizli ve zata mahsustur]. Ankara: T. C. Dahiliye Vekaleti Jandarma Umum Kumandanligi, n. d. [c. 1935], 38–39, cited in M. van Bruinessen, "Débat", 20.

38 S. Akgül, *Yakın Tarihimizde Dersim İsyanlari ve Gerçekler,* Istanbul: Bogaziçi Yayınları, 1992, 155.

39 This ist the official number, cf. D. Akgül, 155–156.

and distributed over the country. Then they are dumped anywhere, without a roof over their head or employment. They do not know a single word of Turkish."[40] Significantly, the little flock of Armenians in such provincial towns as Kayseri proved to be the most helpful neighbours to this destitute people.[41]

Conclusion and outlook

It is not surprising that many Alevis looked with satisfaction on the decline of Sunni power in the nineteenth century; they felt confirmed in their centuries-old hopes. With astonishing ease, if somewhat naively, many Kızılbaş tribes and villages turned from the mid-nineteenth century on to the American missionaries, considering them as long-awaited teachers. This early penetration of rural areas by men and women representing Western modernity fascinated the villagers not so much for its technical aspects – as in the case of Ottoman restorers and reformers – as for the free, self-confident attitudes it revealed and, to be sure, for the material well-being it indicated. The close ties of Ottoman and Young Turkish reformers with the endeavor to reestablish the undisputed rule of the Empire and its *millet-i hakime*, by centralization within the country and by arming to ward off external threats, made Alevis deeply suspicious, even if they gladly welcomed all liberal proclamations. But these proclamations were never lastingly implemented in the regions where Alevis lived.

The state reformers soon perceived the dangers of what American missionaries – too smugly – called Islam's "internal breach" and "deadly wound" (the deep division from the beginning within Islam).[42] They

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40 Cited in Zürcher, "Travel Diaries ".
41 Interview by the author in Izmir, September 2003, with people removed from the Dersim to Kayseri in 1937/38.
42 G. E. White, "The Shia Turks", *Transactions of the Victoria Institute* 40 (1908), 225–226.

made important efforts to overcome it. From this angle we may interpret the Kemalists' abolition of the caliphate and repression of Sunni Islam in the public sphere as a last radical attempt to mend the old breach. But the exclusive ethnic nationalism that served as an ideological *ersatz* for religion alienated the Kurdish Alevis in particular. A constructive republican dynamic did not generally make any headway in the eastern provinces, where a state of emergency, with a few interruptions, continued to reign throughout the twentieth century.

Despite the Kemalists's efforts to construct a prehistoric ethnic origin for their nation (the so-called Turkish History Thesis), Islam proved in the long term a crucial element of national, *millî*, identity. In fact, the creation of the Directorate of Religious Affairs in 1924 integrated Sunni Islam into the state from the beginning. Moreover, Sunni Muslim Turks determined the contents of the Republic's unitary "national culture" and to a large extent retained control over public resources. After 1945, the definition of this culture slowly shifted from a radically Turkist discourse[43] towards a semi-official Turkish-Islamic synthesis, the dominant ideology in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

The second half of the twentieth century brought the most profound social change in the history of the Alevis since the sixteenth century: a virtual end to the traditional, rural Alevi organization that had secretly continued to function under the single-party regime. This finale coincided with the establishment of an urban Alevi diaspora, through the massive migration of rural people, and especially Eastern Alevis, to urban centres in Turkey and Europe. In a parallel process, a broadly leftist protest generation emerged in the 1970s. All this finally led in the 1990s to a spectacular public renaissance of Alevi identity in an urban context. But, whereas religious, *de facto* Sunni teaching was made obligatory in schools after 1980 and Sunni structures, including the construction of mosques, were massively sponsored by the state, the Alevis, as always in the past, saw themselves largely excluded from the officially recognized culture in its textbooks, its public institutions and its public space.

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43   "Turkism" being synonymous of Turkish ethno-nationalism.

Hussein Gharbieh

Hizbullah and the Legacy of Imam Musa al-Sadr

Introduction

At the present time, the Lebanese Shiite community is a vital actor on the Lebanese political stage, in stark contrast to its position at the time of independence in 1943, when it had long been marginalized. The activities of Musa al-Sadr (b. 1928), a Shiite cleric from a family originating in Lebanon who 'returned' to the country from Qum in 1959, were a major factor in the process of Shiite integration into Lebanese society. In achieving this, al-Sadr was shrewd enough to take account of the interests of the major players at the national, regional and international levels; this led him to take a moderate stance in order to raise the Shiites to a status equal to that of the other communities in Lebanon. In addition, he recognized the special role of the Syrians in Lebanon and their importance for the Arab-Israeli conflict. A similarly moderate line was adopted by the institutions which al-Sadr established, such as the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council, SISC, and by *Harakat al-Mahrumin* (the "Movement of the Dispossessed") and its military wing Amal (*Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniyya,* the Lebanese Resistance Battalions). This paper will discuss a number of issues that were of major concern to al-Sadr: most notably, the transformation of the Shiites into an independent community, the preservation of the fundamental structures of Lebanese society and its principles of coexistence, the strengthening of ties with Syria and the role of the United Nations in Lebanon. His moderate way of addressing them contrasted with Hizbullah's more ideological approach, although realities on the ground eventually led Hizbullah too to adopt a more pragmatic line.

It is important to note that primary sources have been used where Hizbullah is concerned – especially *Al-'Ahd*, the voice of Hizbullah, which reflected and conveyed its political positions directly from the mouth of it leading members.

The Integrity of Lebanon

Upon his arrival in Lebanon in 1959, al-Sadr was warmly welcomed by both the *zu'ama'* and the *'ulama'* of the Shia community. However, he soon began to arouse their enmity as his perception of his role in society differed from that of other Shiite clerics. It may be assumed that the *zu'ama'* thought al-Sadr would behave in the deferential manner of previous *'ulama'*, but in reality he had a clear vision of serving the Shiite community to the best of his ability, rather than of deferring to the influence of the *zu'ama'*. He considered that his allegiance should be to the state rather than to individuals.

Al-Sadr's original intention was to complete his religious studies and, in particular, to write a *risala* (thesis);[1] he may well have imagined that he was coming to a quiet backwater where there would be ample opportunity for him to do research and become a *mujtahid*. The haze soon evaporated as he became engaged in social and political activities, so intensely that he neglected his plans and never managed to finish the *risala*. Yet his understanding of Islam and Shiism, and especially his approach to Lebanese society, actually made him a first-class *mujtahid*, and he gave a number of *fatwas* on social and political issues, beginning with one in 1961 that forbade begging in the city of Tyre. It was clear to him that the community he had come to serve did not need another 'traditional' *'alim*; rather, it needed someone on whom it could rely to

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1   H. Gharbieh, *Political Awareness of the Shi'ites in Lebanon: The Role of Sayyid Abd al-Husain Sharaf al-Din and Sayyid Musa Al-Sadr*, Durham: Ph.D. thesis, Durham University, CMEIS, 1996, 164.

promote change and prosperity. Aware of the huge social and economic disparities between the different parts of Lebanon, al-Sadr realized that a new approach was required to advance the position of the Shiites. He asked one of his colleagues to convey this message to the *'ulama'* of Najaf, from whom he received support.[2]

Thus, al-Sadr developed a new and totally different approach, which he hoped would bring about change from within for the benefit of the Shiites. He also believed that Lebanon provided a unique example to the world, and that it could prove the unity of God despite its plurality of religions. He therefore rejected antagonism among believers in the name of religion and consistently preached the need for harmony,[3] calling for a 'faithful society' *(al-mujtama' al-mu'min)* that would be based on serving people regardless of their religious background.

In order to improve the political status of his community, al-Sadr thought it important to build bridges with all parties – and by operating within these parameters he came to grasp the nature of Lebanese society and its delicate relationships among different communities. This understanding that he gradually achieved in the early years was to prove fruitful later on, and his political shrewdness explains how he was able to broaden his appeal for change well beyond his own community.

In 1962 al-Sadr formed the *Haraka Ijtima'iyya* social movement together with the Greek Orthodox archbishop, Grégoire Haddad, in order to promote literacy and health programmes in the South.[4] To justify this cooperation, he referred to a hadith of the Prophet which says that all people are children of God, and the most beloved of God are those of his children who serve the people best. He wanted to stress the Prophet's word 'people', since it had no sectarian connotation and suggested that all people were worthy of being served. This understanding with the Christians reached a peak in the early 1970s, and al-Sadr

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2   Ibid., 165.
3   R. A. Norton, "Changing Actors and Leadership among the Shi'ites of Lebanon", *AAPSS* (1985), 113.
4   T. Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1993, 189.

regularly preached in churches until the beginning of the civil war in 1975. His opponents often tried to cast doubt on his religious sincerity by using photographs that showed him preaching beneath a cross.[5] But in reply al-Sadr always justified his actions by reciting the hadith or a passage from the Koran.

The building of bridges with intellectuals regardless of religious or political orientation was a consistent feature of al-Sadr's approach in Lebanon, and intellectuals lent him their support in the mid-seventies when he established his reform movement *Harakat al-Mahrumin*.[6] Already in 1964 he received an invitation from *al-Nadwa al-Lubnaniyya*, a club that organized regular seminars and talks, where he gave a wide-ranging lecture on various Shiite concepts such as *marja' al-taqlid,* how he understood this doctrine, his position among other *maraji'* and the scope of his authority within society.[7] The last issue was a major focus of debate among Shiite *'ulama'*, especially after Imam Khomeini seized power in Iran in 1979. At that time Khomeini was the main advocate of the notion of *wilayat al-faqih*, which gives immense powers to Shiite *'ulama'* in positions of political authority, almost equal to those of the infallible imams. In his lecture al-Sadr espoused a less extreme view of the *faqih's* authority. He said that the authority of the *marja'* did not entail political duties, as politics would divert him from his main duty of learning and teaching religion. However, he considered that the *marja'* should make authoritative pronouncements on political issues in order to prevent what might otherwise be harmful to Islam.[8] This was totally rejected by Hizbullah, as we shall see in due course. The platform at *Nadwa al-Lubnaniyya* gave an additional boost to al-Sadr's popularity in intellectual circles, which he used in the mid-1970s to gain support for *Harakat al-Mahrumin*.

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5   Gharbieh, op. cit., 174.
6   Al-Sadr believed that Lebanon needed a non-sectarian movement which would look after the needs of people from the different communities. The main members of *Harakat al-Mahrumin* were intellectuals from various communities who found that the demands of the movement summarized their aspirations.
7   M. al-Sadr, *Manbar wa-mihrab*, Beirut: Dar al-Arqam, 1981, 17–23.
8   Ibid., 29.

Once established in Lebanon, al-Sadr began working towards the larger goal of establishing a Shiite identity and creating a stronger Shiite allegiance to the Lebanese state. Contradictory as these aims may seem, he had a clear vision of how to implement his policies in Lebanese society. Despite the extreme tensions among various politicians and parties, which of course eventually led to the civil war, the years between 1967 and 1975 were something of a golden age for al-Sadr, as he succeeded in breaking down most of the barriers separating Shiites from the other communities.

Al-Sadr launched a number of official and non-official institutions to fulfil his two objectives. First, he managed to establish a Shiite council in May 1967 to represent the community's interests throughout Lebanon. Second, as we have already seen, he founded *Harakat al-Mahrumin* in March 1974 to foster allegiance to the state. As a result, he achieved recognition as the official spiritual leader of the Shiite community at the same time that he managed to extend his leadership to the level of the nation. He was aware that, unless he established himself within the system, any attempts at reform would be a waste of time.

The Supreme Islamic Shiite Council, SISC

Before 1967, the Shiite community did not have a religious council that represented and defended its interests vis-à-vis the state and other communities. The creation of a Shiite identity required the establishment of such a body: indeed, councils of this kind were no novelty in Lebanon, and the Shiites were the last to establish one.[9] Since 1967 the Shiites have maintained independence in their religious affairs according to the *shar'ia* and Ja'fari jurisprudence.

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9   T. Sicking and S. Khairallah, "The Shi'a Awakening in Lebanon: a Search for Radical Change in a Traditional Way", *CEMAN Reports*, Beirut: St. Joseph University, 1974, 98.

Al-Sadr sought to enlist a wide and representative coalition of Shiites to the council. Deputies, *'ulama'*, former regime elements and men with wealth were all welcomed if they were willing to help and clever enough to realize that their own interests were best served by a body serving all the Shiites of Lebanon. The Council had 43 seats on its executive committee: 19 for Shiite parliamentary deputies, 12 for clerics and 12 for laymen. Al-Sadr saw the SISC as an opportunity to endow the Shiite community with an official voice on social and political issues. The year 1969 proved particularly eventful in Lebanon as tensions began to surface between two groups: the representatives of sectarianism, which happened to be the right-wing Christian parties; and the representatives of secularism, which happened to be the left-wing parties, dominated by Muslims. Al-Sadr vehemently rejected any estrangement among Lebanon's communities and constantly called for dialogue to eliminate tensions.

He explained his moderate course in a lecture at St. Joseph University in Beirut. Here he rejected secularism, on the grounds that a society without religion would become a society without morality, but also sectarianism, on the grounds that it discriminated among individuals and prevented the creation of a sense of national identity. When he was asked what kind of system he preferred, he replied: "The Lebanese sectarian system would disappear only with the abolition of the various personal status laws and their unification under a single law."[10] It was an unexpected answer, since the only way to abolish the existing personal status laws would have been to create a civil legal system. Unfortunately he was not asked to elaborate on the issue.

Al-Sadr's efforts to promote coexistence in Lebanon began to be disrupted by the growing tensions between the Palestinians and Israel, especially in the South that had to bear the brunt of Israeli aggression. This situation prompted al-Sadr to work tirelessly to avoid further disasters. He believed that the sharing of responsibility by other Lebanese communities for the future of the South would help to consolidate

10 *Lisan al-Hal*, 24 December 1970.

political allegiance to the state, and so he reiterated the importance of complete devotion to national sovereignty and the integrity of the national territory.[11] It was at this point that he moved to establish a non-sectarian movement for reform which would appeal to all Lebanese regardless of their religious background.

Harakat al-Mahrumin

In 1974 al-Sadr's demands formed part of the programme of a social movement that he sought to establish with the help of intellectuals from the various communities. As it was his habit to prepare public opinion in advance, he gradually introduced the idea that a non-sectarian movement was needed to represent the demands of deprived Lebanese. His calls for an end to sectarianism reached a height in 1974, when he helped to form a committee of well-known members from different communities and presided over its regular meetings to formulate a set of demands.[12] On 17 March 1974, the demands received their widest level of support at a rally in Baalbek where he announced the establishment of *Harakat al-Mahrumin*.[13]

As the Shiites formed the majority in the movement, al-Sadr was accused of promoting sectarian division. However, on 19 November, 191 prominent intellectuals from various religious communities signed a declaration of support for the movement, which was described as "reaching beyond the Shiite community".[14] The Maronite Patriarch Khuraysh considered al-Sadr the standard-bearer of the defence of the South and regarded his institutions as a haven for all Lebanese.[15]

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11   *Charter of Harakat al-Mahrumin*, Principle 5.
12   Gharbieh, op. cit., 207.
13   *Al-Nahar*, 20 March 1975.
14   Sicking, & Khairallah, "The Shiʿa awakening in Lebanon …", 102.
15   *Al-Nahar*, 30 March 1975.

Ghassan Tuwayni, a leading Christian personality, former editor of *Al-Nahar* and a former ambassador,[16] described the Baalbek rally as:

> […] a revolution on the part of a sect, but not a sectarian revolution. The Shiite community was not interested in governing the country, but it did not want to be ruled by an unjust government. The Shiite revolution is not sectarian because it is not directed against another community but against the government.

Early in 1975 the estrangement between Right and Left intensified, with the Palestinian issue another factor increasing tensions; the Palestinian presence in the country was widely criticized by the right wing and the country began its lurch towards civil war. When Syria then sent in its troops, the warring Lebanese factions adopted different attitudes to the intervention. On another front, Israel was stepping up its aggression in southern Lebanon.

These rapid developments hindered al-Sadr's efforts to achieve his objectives. The chaos left no room for reasoning: it was a time for the different factions to make their dispositions and alliances, particularly when civil war broke out. At this point al-Sadr felt he had no option but to go with Syria.[17] It was a choice that made him a direct enemy of the left-wing parties.

The Ties with Syria

In 1976, the Syrians intervened with the immediate aim of maintaining a certain balance and preventing a decisive victory of one faction over another. They managed to secure an agreement among the major Lebanese factions to produce some minor reforms, and by February

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16 *Al-Nahar*, 17 March 1974.
17 Syria has always maintained a balance of power among the Lebanese factions – a fundamental policy matching al-Sadr's basic principle of co-operation and co-existence among the communities of Lebanon.

1976 they had orchestrated the constitutional reform document, *al-Wathiqa al-Dusturiyya*. This kept the top three positions in the Lebanese system as before, but provided for parity of Muslim and Christian representation in parliament and a reduction in the powers of the president. It also enhanced the position of the prime minister, who was to be elected by parliament instead of being chosen by the president.[18]

In response, the left-wing Druze leader Kamal Junblat branded the Syrian forces as foreigners, protested against their "meddling in Lebanon's internal affairs"[19] and demanded their withdrawal. On an administrative level, he presided over a newly established council consisting of the Lebanese Left and various Palestinian parties. The council established local administrative committees, as well as popular army and local security forces, in order to "fill the vacuum" left by the authorities.

Junblat's actions were totally rejected by al-Sadr, who supported Syria's initiatives and called for reconciliation among the Lebanese factions. He also called on President Assad to intervene to put an end to the war in Beirut. As a result he split from the other national progressive groups.[20]

He further stated:

> Social and political reform in Lebanon will not occur by military action. On the contrary, militancy will jeopardize the course of reform, which we should pursue peacefully.[21]

The integrity of Lebanon was the prime issue for al-Sadr, and he rejected any action that might jeopardize it. Thus he opposed the local administration committees that Junblat had worked to establish, on the grounds that they represented "the beginning of the disintegration of Lebanon and the establishment of a new and unacceptable authority". He even declared that he was against decentralization:

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18   Such a reform was adopted in the Ta'if Agreement of 1989.
19   *Al-Nahar*, 17 March 1976.
20   *Al-Nahar*, 9 June 1976.
21   Ibid.

> Decentralization is the most proper way to administer the country, but this will happen only when the country is politically stable and not divided as Lebanon is today.[22]

This division between the progressive groups and Syria encouraged the involvement of other regional players which thought they might exert an influence in Lebanese politics. Junblat and the Palestinians thought that Libya could pose a real challenge to the Syrians,[23] and on 11 April 1976 Qaddafi announced that he would not allow the Syrians to control the Left and the PLO. Tripoli's interest in Lebanon was demonstrated when Libyan prime minister 'Abd al-Salam Jallud, acting as an observer for Qaddafi, paid a long visit to the country from 5 June until 29 July 1976. Qaddafi's attitude to the progressive and radical groups in Lebanon was plainly different from that of the Syrian regime: he rejected Syria's intervention and its policy of balancing the Lebanese factions, announcing on several occasions that he would support the progressive groups and the Lebanese Arab Army, LAA, until they achieved complete victory.[24] In October, Qaddafi stepped up his opposition to reconciliation among the Lebanese, most notably by breaking off diplomatic relations with Syria.

In response to these moves, al-Sadr stated that Libya did not have any political or military authority in Lebanon and condemned Qaddafi's support for the Communists in particular. The Communists and al-Sadr were at odds with each other because they both targeted the Shiites for recruitment: the Communists considered that the often economically deprived Shiites could act as a force to achieve some of their secular objectives, while al-Sadr wanted to create a sense of Shiite identity under his leadership.

The intensifying civil war drew in yet another regional player, Israel, which invaded southern Lebanon in 1978. The international community represented by the United Nations then intervened, and two

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22   Ibid.
23   A. Kelidar & M. Burrell, "Lebanon: The collapse of a state", *Conflict Studies* 74 (1976), 4.
24   'A. Rida, *Ma'a al-Intizar li-l-Imam Musa al-Sadr*, Beirut: Al-Hawra Press, 112.

resolutions, 425 and 426, were passed by the Security Council to deal with the situation.

Attitudes to the UN Forces in Lebanon

Although al-Sadr did not stay in Lebanon for long after the Israeli invasion in 1978, he made clear his position on the role of the United Nations and its forces in Lebanon. Realizing that the Israeli occupation could be effectively opposed only through a combination of firm resistance and international support, he welcomed the Security Council resolutions and was prepared to accept the UN mission in Lebanon. For they meant international recognition of Lebanon's borders, and implied that the Israeli forces were an army of occupation which it was legitimate to resist.

At the end of August 1978, al-Sadr was mysteriously abducted while on a visit to Libya.[25] This caused great turmoil in the Lebanese Shiite community and triggered competition for his succession. Two figures took control of the two major institutions he had founded: Sheikh Shams al-Din of the SISC,[26] and Nabih Berri of Amal. The two men maintained the general course of action set by al-Sadr, but both found themselves challenged by Hizbullah. The newly established organization had a hardline vision of Islam, which it longed to fulfil not only in Lebanon but throughout the Islamic world. The circumstances leading to the foundation of Hizbullah are not the theme of this paper, but it should be said that it was established and funded to promote Iranian

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25 Antagonism between al-Sadr and Qaddafi was at a peak when al-Sadr received an invitation to visit Libya on the occasion of the Libyan revolution. Some close associates advised al-Sadr not to go, but he thought it would provide an opportunity to break the ice and to clear up the problems between Qaddafi and himself.

26 He died in 2002 and was succeeded by Sheikh 'Abd al-Amir Qabalan who is a member of Amal.

interests. Its challenge to al-Sadr's principles lasted for nearly a decade, during which the Shiites endured a great deal of hardship. Eventually Hizbullah came to the conclusion that, if it was to survive, it would have to follow a more moderate line.

Hizbullah and the Integrity of Lebanon

In contrast to al-Sadr's approach, Hizbullah rested upon purely religious principles, particularly the idea of *wilayat al-faqih* that inevitably tied it to Iran. This left it with room to manoeuvre only within the Shiite community, not on the wider stage. For a good number of years its main purpose was to compete with Amal for the recruitment of Shiites, appealing in particular to those who believed in *wilayat al-faqih* and to those who aspired to have an Islamic State. Hizbullah declared that its principal objective was to establish an Islamic *Umma*, of which Lebanon would constitute only a part. Inevitably, therefore, it sought to discredit any other Shiite institution or leadership with a different agenda; it was only a matter of time before the community split and clashes broke out between the major factions.

Hizbullah's basic principle of *wilayat al-faqih* gave the *'ulama'* a highly inflated role in society: it not only opposed the separation of religion from politics but went one step further by declaring that the *'ulama'* were the leaders of society.[27] In one detailed exposition, Hizbullah's spokesman Sayyid Ibrahin Amin made it clear that it sought to unite spiritual and temporal power in the hands of the *faqih*, that Khomeini was to be the leader, and that the final aim was to make Lebanon part of an Islamic state rather than maintain its separate identity.[28] The Secretary General of Hizbullah, Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli, revealed the par-

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27 *Al-'Ahd* 8, 5–8.
28 Ibid.

ty's true nature when he declared: "We consider ourselves an Islamic movement not a Lebanese one".[29]

Hizbullah believes that only the *faqih* can decide in the best interests of Islam and Muslims; only his political views should be followed. Indeed, the issue is not whether to follow the right political decisions or opinions but how to determine which authority is entitled to issue such decisions. To follow a secular politician whose political opinions are sound is a sinful act, but to follow the *faqih* is right and proper even if his political views are erroneous. It all comes down to whether the *faqih* approves or disapproves.[30]

For Hizbullah, then, Lebanon was of little significance in itself but served only as a platform from which it could launch its struggle against the "evil" represented by the West. Distrust of Hizbullah was further reinforced after Imam Khomeini's statement that "the Lebanese system is illegal and criminal".[31]

Such attitudes towards Lebanon antagonized not only the Christians, whom al-Sadr had tried to appease, but also moderate Shiites and Sunnis. Hizbullah tended to reject any initiative to end the turmoil in Lebanon if it was not based on Islamic terms; even to speak of nationalism was for it a sinful act. By contrast, al-Sadr attempted to draw all the Lebanese communities together in order to strengthen their allegiance to the state and to forge a single strategy against Israel's objectives in the country. He realized that any support for the South would not be achieved without the support of the entire Lebanese community, and for that reason he addressed the conflict in nationalist terms.

Hizbullah's aim was to islamize all aspects of Lebanese life, and so it rejected secular nationalism. Ibrahim Amin spelled this out clearly: to describe the resistance as national was merely preparing the ground for nationalist movements to make peace with Israel when the time came; resistance had to be Islamic, and Israel was the enemy before, during

29 *Al-ʿAhd* 27.
30 Ibid. 71.
31 Sheikh Hasan Yasin, a former secretary of Hizbullah's radio station, *Al-Shiraʿ* 592 (1993).

and after its occupation of southern Lebanon;[32] the term national was being put forward to "suffocate" the Islamic resistance.[33] Hizbullah's Islamic agenda was based on four principles: to maintain the struggle against Israel, to change the Lebanese system, to free Lebanon from foreign involvement, and to islamize Lebanon.[34] Iran whole-heartedly supported this agenda; indeed, Ayatullah Muntazari called for an Islamic state in Lebanon in which minority rights would be respected.[35]

On a different occasion, Sheikh Tufayli confirmed that there was a major difference between the beliefs of Hizbullah and Amal. For him Amal was a Lebanese movement functioning within a Lebanese framework; "Hizbullah is not a Lebanese movement and Lebanon forms only a small part of our interests in the region".[36] Such fundamental differences would eventually bring the two factions into a fierce and bloody conflict that lasted for more than two years. Muhtashami, then interior minister of Iran, expressed his pro-Hizbullah position when he said that only those who followed Imam Khomeini would be eligible for Iran's support.[37] This blind championing of Hizbullah added a further dimension of Arab-Persian rivalry to the struggle between the two factions.

At this stage Hizbullah worked to consolidate its position in Lebanon with the support of Iran, and to redirect the commitment of Lebanese Shiites towards Iran. This could be done only by undermining the main proponent of Lebanese Shiite nationalism, which was Amal. In the process, Hizbullah opened another front on which its enemy was the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council.

32 *Al-'Ahd* 38.
33 Ibid. 46.
34 Ibid. 128.
35 Ibid. 192.
36 Ibid. 70.
37 Ibid. 77.

Hizbullah and the SISC

The main purpose of setting up the SISC had been to establish Shiite independence in a multi-sectarian society. When al-Sadr disappeared, after years of working for this end, the same objectives were pursued by his successor Sheikh Shams al-Din. The idea of independence did not fit in with Hizbullah's goal of *wilayat al-faqih*, and besides the council stood in the way of its efforts to mobilise the Shiite population. Therefore, particularly during the fighting with Amal, Hizbullah also subjected the SISC to attack, questioning the very purpose of its existence and casting doubt on the council's credibility.[38]

Despite the fact that Shams al-Din is a leading *mujtahid* well known in religious circles around the world, Hizbullah went out of its way to impugn his authority. It criticized his positive approach to the different Lebanese communities, particularly the Christians. And Ibrahim Amin rejected any idea of sitting down with members of the SISC, which, in his view, was an organization collaborating with Israel and America.[39] This position of Hizbullah's was reiterated on various occasions.

Hizbullah's Relations with Syria

Hizbullah faced a real problem, as its objectives were fundamentally opposed to those of the Syrians. Neither Lebanon nor coexistence meant much to it – a position that ran counter to almost all the principles behind Syria's security initiatives. Moreover, Syria's willingness to consider a comprehensive peace agreement in the Middle East was a source of further sharp differences with both Hizbullah and Iran. The Syrian

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38 Ibid. 204.
39 Ibid. 210.

involvement in Lebanon was always designed to maintain a kind of balance between the Lebanese communities, and to hold in check any Lebanese party that might cause them any kind of security concern; the integrity of Lebanon and coexistence were always Syria's prime objectives. Until 1991 Hizbullah defied all Syria's efforts in this direction, and Damascus had to use the utmost diplomatic skill to maintain its strategic relations with Iran while also showing its determination that no faction should be able to operate in Lebanon without its "permission".

Hizbullah's first official secretary-general, Sheikh Tufayli,[40] and such leading members as Ibrahim Amin and Husayn Musawi showed early signs of their disenchantment with Syria when they met President Assad in mid-1985. Syria was then hosting talks among the major warring factions in Lebanon, that is, Amal, the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)[41] and the Lebanese Forces.[42] The result of the talks was a document called *al-Ittifaq al-Thulathi* (the tripartite agreement), the content of which was in fact a replica of the Syrian initiative of 1976 for constitutional reform.

Hizbullah roundly opposed any such talks,[43] this time through the mouth of Sayyid Fadlallah, who, despite his denials that he even belonged to Hizbullah, was widely believed to be its real spiritual leader, its *murshid ruhi*. The organization's newspaper *Al-'Ahd* assigned a few pages each week to the publication of his political views, which ironically always matched those of Hizbullah. (In the early 1990s, of course, he broke with both Hizbullah and Iran.)

Following the rejection of the Assad-sponsored talks, Fadlallah stated: "It is impossible to transform Lebanon from a sectarian into a non-sectarian society. What is needed is a revolution to change reality."[44]

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40 Hizbullah did not declare who was its secretary-general until the election of Sheikh Tufayli. However, all indications pointed to Sayyid Fadlallah as its leader.

41 PSP was established by the Druze leader Kamal Junblat, who was succeeded by his son Walid after his assassination in 1976.

42 The right-wing Christian Forces were then under the leadership of Elie Hubaiqa, who became a member of the Lebanese cabinet after the Ta'if Agreement.

43 Ibid. 64.

44 Ibid. 69.

Iranian officials seem to have shared the same attitude. Ahmad Azizi, Muhtashami and Muntazari[45] also denounced Syria's efforts and commented that the "Islamic Nation" would accept nothing short of a system ruled by Muslims.

While the internal situation in West Beirut worsened owing to the war in the camps between Amal and the Palestinians, tensions also began to increase between Amal and Hizbullah in the southern suburbs of Beirut. As a result, Syria proposed a security plan in West Beirut in early 1986, which was welcomed by Amal but vehemently rejected by Fadlallah on behalf of Hizbullah.[46]

Not long after, it seems that the Syrians lost patience with Hizbullah's continual rejection of their initiatives and decided that they needed to send it a stronger message; Syrian forces accordingly massacred more than twenty Hizbullah followers in West Beirut in February 1987. This led to strong condemnations of Syria from both Hizbullah and Iranian officials, especially 'Ali Akbar Velayati, who warned Syria not to meddle in Lebanon. He also belittled Syrian influence in Lebanon and said that Iran had the strongest influence of all.[47]

In 1987 the situation in Lebanon span out of control as all progressive factions, including the Palestinians, launched a massive attack on Amal in an attempt to remove the Syrians' only major ally. The ground then began to shift in favour of a Syrian re-entry in force into West Beirut. Yet Hizbullah remained defiant. Nasrallah[48] said that he would not function under any umbrella (the Syrian) or be a tool in their hands, and that Iran under the leadership of Imam Khomeini was Hizbullah's only choice. This was followed by a flurry of statements expressing resentment at Syria's role, including one in which Ibrahim Amin bluntly declared that no one, Arab or non-Arab, would be allowed under any

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45 Head of Foreign Affairs Committee of Iran, Foreign Ministry, ibid., 70. Also Muhtashami, Interior Minister, and Muntazari, Deputy of Imam Khomeini, ibid. 78.
46 Ibid. 109.
47 Ibid. 140.
48 Ibid. 144. Nasrallah became secretary-general of Hizbullah in 1992.

pretext to interfere in Lebanese affairs.[49] Soon after, rumours began to spread of an imminent outbreak of intra-Shiite fighting, that is, between Amal and Hizbullah. Nearly all of Hizbullah leaders dismissed these rumours and said that no such hostilities would be allowed to occur.[50] Yet in April 1988, despite all the assurances, fighting broke out between the two forces in southern Lebanon and spread to the southern suburbs of Beirut.[51]

For Amal, any reconciliation with Hizbullah had to be based on four principles: approval of the UN's role in Lebanon, support for resolution 425, acceptance of the Lebanese system, and Christian-Muslim coexistence. Hizbullah rejected all four principles outright.

In 1989, at Taif in Saudi Arabia, a Syrian and Arab initiative sought to bring the civil war to an end. However, both Hizbullah and Iran rejected the Taif Agreement, which Velayati described as "the conspiracy of Taif", [52] and fighting again broke out between Amal and Hizbullah. Ibrahim Amin declared that "the fighting between Amal and Hizbullah is a struggle over *wilayat al-faqih*; we ought to adhere to *wilayat al-faqih* and Iran as they are the basis of our existence."[53]

49 Ibid. 160.
50 Ibid. 169 & 183.
51 Ibid. 241. In an attempt to reach an agreement, the Syrians sent some officers to discuss matters with Fadlallah. An attempt on the officers' lives as they were on their way to the meeting brought a prompt disavowal from Hizbullah, which promised to punish the perpetrators.
51 Some Iranian officials, notably Velayati, tried to reach an agreement with the Syrians to put an end to the fighting between the two sides. An agreement was reached in Damascus, but it did not hold for long.
52 Ibid. 280 & 281.
53 Ibid. 292.

Hizbullah and the United Nations

United Nations forces exercised a peacekeeping role in the South, between Lebanon and Israel. Hizbullah, on the other hand, was in need of a divided and unsettled terrain on which to conduct its fight against "evil", that is, Israel and the United States. It was therefore not surprising that it rejected the UN mission, which was described as the "Forces of the Devil United",[54] or that Ibrahim Amin warned the UN that its troops would be treated as occupiers, since they did not act as peacekeepers but gave protection to Israeli aggression.[55] Iran also expressed its views through Muhtashami, who declared that southern Lebanon should always be a strong base from which Muslims could confront "international evil".[56] Fadlallah, Nasrallah and Amin accused the United Nations of protecting Israel, and Hizbullah launched an organized campaign against Resolution 425.[57] Such attitudes continued until 1991, when Hizbullah reviewed its policies.

Changing discourse

Following the invasion of Kuwait, the Syrians were given a green light to put an end to the Lebanese Civil War, and this time they were determined to suppress any faction that stood in their way. The major factions opposed to the Taif Agreement were Hizbullah and the forces of General Michel 'Aoun.[58] The Syrians swiftly ended 'Aoun's rebellion,

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54 Ibid. 26.
55 Ibid. 40.
56 Ibid. 77.
57 Ibid. 109.
58 'Aoun was the Lebanese army chief in command who was appointed by President Amin Jumayyil as a military Prime Minister in 1988.

and to avoid a similar crushing of Hizbullah the Iranians sent a number of missions to Damascus to seek an agreement. However, the crisis subsided only when Presidents Assad[59] and Rafsanjani exchanged visits to consolidate their relations.[60]

Iran's recognition of the Security Council resolution ending its war with Iraq, the death of Imam Khomeini and the severe weakening of its economy forced the regime in Tehran to carry out reforms at all levels. The Islamic Republic was compelled to recognize Syria's special interests in Lebanon and Hizbullah had to adjust its policy to that new framework. The Syrians, for their part, managed to limit Iran's ambitions in Lebanon as they had limited those of others in the past. Hizbullah could have shared the same fate if it had remained opposed to Taif, but for the first time it accepted the Syrian security plan for Greater Beirut. "Each period has its own strategy" was the explanation given.[61] Since then, Hizbullah has begun to follow a more moderate line that accords better with the overall interests of Lebanese society. Its tone has been one of dialogue and cooperation, and on many occasions it has reiterated al-Sadr's beliefs and approach. What it used to reject it has gradually come to accept.

After 1991 Hizbullah changed its position towards the SISC, the Syrians, Lebanon and the United Nations; its leaders spoke the language employed by al-Sadr on these issues. As far as Lebanon was concerned, Ibrahim Amin called for the establishment of a "Faithful Society", a term repeatedly used by al-Sadr,[62] and Hizbullah spoke of pursuing harmony for the benefit of Lebanon.

The former secretary-general of Hizbullah, ʿAbbas Musawi, explained that it was necessary for the organization to update its political positions in Lebanon in order to continue the resistance against Israel. Hence he declared his approval of Resolution 425 and the Taif Agreement. To justify this change, Musawi pointed to the efforts of the Lebanese government in signing the Brotherhood and Cooperation Treaty with Syria

59   Ibid. 326.
60   Ibid. 332.
61   Ibid. 331.
62   Ibid. 363.

on 22 May 1991, which preserved the true Arab identity of Lebanon rather than simply an "Arab face".[63]

By 1992 the newly elected secretary-general of Hizbullah, Hasan Nasrallah, could declare his party's intention to participate in the Lebanese general election in order to "strengthen the resistance against Israel".[64] This positive attitude towards the Lebanese state reached a climax in 1997, when Nasrallah announced the establishment of *"al-Saraya al-Lubnaniyya li-Muqawamat al-Ihtilal al-Isra'ili"*, the Lebanese Battalions for Resistance against Israeli Occupation.[65] The name echoed that of al-Sadr's *Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniyya,* the Lebanese Resistance Battalions, and Hizbullah described the resistance as Lebanese as well as Islamic. In addition, Hizbullah hoisted the Lebanese flag together with its own on state occasions. Hizbullah's stance towards the SISC also changed, particularly when differences arose between Berri and Shams al-Din over the succession to Imam al-Sadr, and Hizbullah played a mediating role between the two.[66] Advocacy of an Islamic state has virtually ceased: of course, this was an issue never raised by al-Sadr. Since 1997 Hizbullah has become a major player in the internal affairs of Lebanon, where it has participated in all kinds of elections and formed alliances with other parties with which it has little in common.

Conclusion

Initially Hizbullah adhered to hardline policies, but after 1991 it began to review them and eventually adopted a more moderate strategic line. However, the changes were forced on it in the context of local and regional political developments, and Iran as well as Hizbullah has found it increasingly difficult to pursue the objective of an Islamic state.

63 Ibid. 361.
64 Ibid. 419.
65 Ibid. 717.
66 Ibid. 472.

Hizbullah has come to realize that mere slogans cannot affect the established regional and international framework and that a more rational approach is the proper way to achieve change. For some of the Shiites of Lebanon, the basis for such an approach was already firmly established by Musa al-Sadr. Hizbullah neglected rationality for nearly a decade before making its strategic reforms, but it has now come to recognize the existence of the Lebanese state as well as Syria's special role in Lebanon. This has entailed a change in political activity at all levels of Lebanese society that contain ideologies different from, or opposed to, its own. At the local level, all indications suggest that Hizbullah will play a pragmatic role in the society. Yet the relationship with its main rival, Amal, will always be tense because each strives to mobilize the Shiites in its different way.

Still, Hizbullah has to face a real problem of identity, since, although all its members are Lebanese, it continues to be regarded as an Iranian party. *Wilayat al-faqih* leaves no room for manoeuvre over where its loyalty ultimately lies. This issue is being earnestly discussed among Hizbullah members today. Apart from this, Hizbullah may be straightforwardly described as a pragmatic party at all levels. Yet its process of modernization is under threat because of the events of 9/11, and because the United States administration still classifies Hizbullah as a terrorist organization.

Daniel Meier

The Shiites of Lebanon in the Post-War Era: a New Identity?

A common perception of the Shiites in Lebanon, after the end of the war, centered upon large organizations such as political parties or religious institutions. Of course, the dynamic of the war, and especially the politicization of the country's communities, made it easier for such a monolithic vision to take hold. And it is true that Shiites are much more strongly integrated into political and religious movements than almost any other religious group in Lebanon, probably because of the social structures that have shaped the community. Another element is certainly their specific rituals, which are widely regarded as heretical by other Muslims.

As a way of approaching this one-sided perception of the group, this paper will focus on another dimension of Shiite identity in the post-war era: namely, the relationships between Shiites and Palestinians in areas where they both live, especially southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. Within these rather complex relationships, special attention will be given to marriage because of its symbolic significance in tying together families, groups and, in this case, communities or nationalities. The example of the Palestinians is also interesting because of the long and violent history of animosities they have recently shared with the Shiites[1]. After a period of cohabitation without substantial

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1   A. A. Khalil, "Shiites and Palestinians: Underlying Causes of the Amal-Palestinian Conflict", in C. Hagopian Elaine (eds), *Amal and the Palestinians: Understanding the battle of the camps*, Belmont: Arab-American University (Massachusetts), Papers Nº 9, 1985, 9–13.

contact, the militarization of the Palestinian Resistance and the arrival of the PLO in Beirut at the end of the sixties created a perception of the Palestinians as revolutionaries who were able to assist the disinherited *(mahroumin)*[2]. This point of view, which even led to some involvement of Shiites in the PLO, changed with the Israeli invasion in 1982. After that, relations between the two groups worsened during the eighties with the outbreak of factional struggles. Since the end of the war, the marginalization of the Palestinians seems to have been the other side of the progressive success of the Shiite movement.

My hypothesis is that, instead of a monolithic and endogamous vision of the Shiites, their relations with Palestinians seen through the lens of marriage demonstrate a religious mixture, the importance of a past common life and the harshness of the present economic situation. All these aspects of daily life are more important in defining the Shiites and how they have dealt with other groups at the individual level in the post-war era. More than a new identity, it is a certain dynamic that defines the Shiites. The paper is accordingly divided into three parts. First, it begins with a summary account of the position of Shiites in Lebanon since the civil war. Second, it considers how the process of their changing identity should be analyzed, and in presenting my field-work offers a qualitative study of two types of Shiite–Palestinian couple and discusses what their interactions reveal about the dynamic of the Shiites in the post-war era. In the third part, the attitudes of the Shiites since the civil war are compared with those of other communities in the country, in an attempt to understand what makes Shiites proud of their present identity.

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2   A. R. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: The Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988.

1. The Shiites after the Civil War

Why has the Shiite movement in Lebanon become so powerful today? Following Bourdieu[3], we may say that it is possible to create a group with distinct characteristics only at specific historical moments when it appears legitimate to draw a line between "them" and "us". The power that carries this out needs to be articulated, and symbols need to be used in order to mobilize people. Of course, the new elites need some support, in such forms as money or powerful neighbours, to achieve what they have promised.

In the context of the war, and particularly the breakdown of the state[4] in 1976, the Shiite Amal movement led by Imam Musa al-Sadr became an orphan after his disappearance in 1978[5]. This allowed the Shiite political elite to strengthen its alliance with the Syrians, the new power that appeared on the battlefield during this period. This change happened slowly, during a long process of distancing itself from the national movement and especially the Palestinian resistance.

Khalidi[6] observed the gradual erosion of confidence in southern Lebanon between Amal and the Palestinians, and, more importantly, the loss of patience by a Shiite population that could no longer bear the arrogant attitude of the fedayeen. Although the Israeli invasion of 1982 unified all the Lebanese left-wing militias, the sudden change in the balance of power created an opportunity for the Shiites to assert control in southern Lebanon via Damascus and to replace the Palestinian resistance when it was forced to leave the country by the end of the year. In 1982 the first Iranian battalion of Pasdarans arrived in the Bekaa

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3   P. Bourdieu, *Choses dites*, Paris: Minuit, 1987.
4   F. el-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon 1967–1976*, London: Centre for Lebanese Studies, I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2001.
5   F. Ajami, *The vanished Imam: Musa al-Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, London: I. B. Tauris / Cornell University Press, 1986.
6   R. Khalidi, *Under Siege: PLO Decisionmaking During the 1982 War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Valley and started to build up what become the Shiite Party of God, the Hizbullah[7].

During the 1980s, as Amal strengthened its links with Syria, its leader Nabih Berri became the most noted person at peace talks (for example, in Lausanne and Geneva); it was he who signed the Tripartite Agreement in December 1985 in Damascus with the Druze party PSP and the Christian Militia Lebanese Force[8]. At the same time, Hizbullah oriented towards the Islamic struggle, or jihad. It was against everything Western and, from its base in the southern suburbs of Beirut, occasionally attacked the Multinational Force and kidnapped Western journalists to place pressure on their governments. It was a well-organized force which, with Iranian funds, provided some much-needed assistance (food, welfare, medicine and health care) to the poor people, mainly Shiites. It also engaged in clashes with Amal in 1989 and 1990 over the leadership of the Shiite community in Lebanon.

These two parties, which are at the centre of many books on the Shiites of Lebanon, have survived in two different ways. Amal became one of the strongest pro-Syrian parties and continued to be led by Nabih Berri, who was elected to the presidency of the Parliament. Many networks are linked to Amal, and in part the equilibrium of the State depends on this essentially Shiite political group. Hizbullah has followed a more tortuous path, and although it is starting to become a civil party it still keeps its heavy weapons to continue the fight against Israel[9]. Hizbullah projects itself as the party fighting for the liberation of Lebanon and, more recently, for the liberation of the whole Arab world from "Zionist imperialism". Norton summarizes this changing strategy as follows:

7   See this party from itself on "Hizbullah – the Party of God. Statement of Purpose: Views and Concepts", http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/320/324/324.2/hizballah, 11.08.02

8   E. Picard, "La politique de la Syrie au Liban", *Maghreb-Machrek* 116 (1987), 5–34.

9   A. R. Norton, "Hizballah: From Radicalism to Pragmatism?", *Middle East Policy* 5/4 (January 1998), http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/320/324/324.2/hizballah/norton.html.

> In a passing moment of revolutionary fervour, Hizbullah could count on heavy financial and fiscal support from Tehran, but that moment has passed. Now, Hizbullah faces the reality of an Iranian patron that may be indifferent to its fate, and a Syrian strategic partner for whom its value is transient. Under these circumstances, Hizbullah has little choice but to plant its feet firmly in Lebanon.[10]

In this context, some authors do not hesitate to speak of a "Syrianization of Hizbullah".[11]

   This process clearly illustrates how powerful the parties of the Shiite community became after the war. The first party, Amal, has the leadership of a number of political networks at national level, while the second party, Hizbullah, uses the resistance as a political tool in southern Lebanon whenever Damascus needs to send a message to Israel. But what lies in between, deep in the society, is unknown. While recent history is to some degree indicative of the political power that the Shiite community has achieved, the dependence on Damascus shows how weak is the legitimization of these party structures. We also need to stress some of the dynamics of the Shiites in contemporary Lebanon and, having clarified the theoretical premises, to focus on certain kinds of social interaction.

2. Identities in Flux

Analysts of social change used to define actors in terms of their identity, but this has become a difficult concept to use because its meaning is imprecise. The word conjures up something unique, with no explanation of how it came about. It would be more useful, however, to employ the term in relation to the creation of an identity rather than

10 A. R. Norton, "Walking between Raindrops: Hizballah in Lebanon", *Mediterranean Politics* 3/1 (1998), 100.

11 G. C. Gambill, Z. K. Abdelnour, "Hezbollah: Between Tehran and Damascus", *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 4/2 (February 2002), http://meib.org/articles/0202_11.htm.

the description of a given state, since that better reflects the importance of historical influences and the interaction between actors and groups out of which identity is created.

The well-known author Fredrik Barth lucidly explained that ethnic boundaries are constantly negotiated between actors: if "us" depends on "them", it is important to observe the relations between two groups; identity is defined within the interaction, not by itself, in an isolated situation[12]. Following Barth, we are able to understand that actors do not lose their identity if boundaries are crossed, that, on the contrary, it survives and even renews itself. In this sense, identity is a dynamic structure, open to others and built through social interactions.

Within this perspective, my fieldwork was done in an area were it was possible to observe particular relationships and actions, discourse concerning those actions, and the ways in which the other group involved in the interaction was perceived. Marriage is a central social phenomenon and has a symbolic dimension; it reveals everyday relationships and identities in action. It also reveals the boundaries of group identity and shows how people transcend the individual level in the collective level. It allows us to observe how people define the group's rules and prohibitions and the effects that these have on their actions. In the case in question, then, marriage offers a point of view on the dynamics of social change in the Shiite community social change as well as on the Palestinian group. As we shall see, light is thereby shed on some of what has happened to the Lebanese Shiites in their interactions with Palestinians over the last fifteen years.

To understand what happens when Shiites and Palestinians marry, we need to clarify the conditions that have to be met for a Palestinian to obtain Lebanese citizenship. Since Palestinians arrived in Lebanon in 1948, it has been theoretically impossible for Palestinian men to obtain citizenship; laws were introduced to define citizenship in terms of blood relations, so that, in the absence of a special presidential decree, it became impossible for a man to become a Lebanese citizen. A woman who

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12   F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Bergen, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969.

marries a Lebanese can obtain citizenship, even if she is Palestinian, and her children then become Lebanese. On the other hand, a Lebanese woman will have Palestinian children if her husband is Palestinian[13].

In our case study, we found two types of mixed couple that showed different attitudes but no real gender preferences. The first group was composed of people living far from refugee camps: members of Lebanese middle-class families, who usually do not involve themselves in politics. These Shiites – men or women – had received a middle or higher education and had good jobs. They had usually met their Palestinian wife or husband during their studies or at work. But the common perception of the Palestinian families is quite negative, in particular, it is feared that in their reduced economic state one may find the seeds of later social upheaval. Consequently we have observed in almost every case how parental opposition made it difficult for these Shiites to marry the partner of their choice. Rada, a 45 year-old woman, explained this problem quite clearly:

> When I was a little girl, during the sixties, I remember that the name 'Palestinian' was almost like an insult. I am proud to have made my parents change their mind about Palestinians with my husband Samir. It was hard and we had to wait more than one year before my parents allowed me to marry him. The only important thing for them was that we got married under the Shiite religious law. As a Sunni, Samir is not really religious, so he accepted easily.

Religion seems to be important for the Shiite families in the first category – generally with a good level of income – even though all have a university education. The point is not that they are religious, but that they use the fact of belonging to the Shiite community to define who are "outsiders". The main arguments heard against any Shiite-Palestinian marriage in this group of families were: 1) he or she is not a Shiite, 2) he or she is a Palestinian. It is also interesting that, in this group of Lebanese and Palestinian families, the boy or girl getting married was the only one among his or her brothers and sisters – and, as far as I could tell, the first one in the history of the family – to make such a marriage.

13 S. Haddad, *The Palestinian Impasse in Lebanon: The Politics of Refugee Integration*, Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2003.

Another typical aspect of this group, as we said before, is its low level of political involvement. This is probably related to the geographical distance from Palestinians: people who do not live close to them do not share the same problems and perceptions, and most of all they do not know their reality; therefore, it is harder for them to get involved. For this middle-layer category, a neutral political profile is often a way of preserving its income. As Hana, a Shiite Lebanese from the Bekaa, put it: "When you're doing business, you'd better keep your distance from political activities if you want to stay in business."

The children are at the centre of all the questions that come up. What will they do as Palestinians? How will they survive in a ruined country like Lebanon? What can their parents do for them? All the parents and families in this group who were asked questions about the future had been trying to find solutions for their children. Rada has given birth to three children in Britain so that they may have another nationality than that of her Palestinian husband. Naila, a 51-year-old woman living in the Rashidiyye camp, would like all her other children to go abroad, like her first two sons who married in Sweden. In Beirut I was told by Hana, a 33-year-old married girl who lives far from her family's village (in the Bekaa):

> My husband has a brother in Canada who was able to acquire Canadian citizenship. My husband will also try to get it when he has finished his MA. After that, he will come back to Lebanon and obtain Lebanese nationality as a Canadian citizen. Then, it will finally be possible to ask for Lebanese citizenship for our son.

The second group is quantitatively more important, with people more linked to one another in their daily lives. In contrast to the first group, it is unusual to find university graduates: most have low incomes or even face poverty. Shiites and Palestinians who intermarry in this group live in a camp if the husband is Palestinian, or more often in a settlement near a camp if the husband is a Shiite. The reason for this is that they all live in or close to poverty and have menial jobs, or daily work together with Palestinians. This proximity, which lasts for a long time, results from family ties, but there are also historical links since the vil-

lages are situated near the border. Often the wife or husband is from a village in the neighbourhood, including in Palestine. These relations then lead to intricate links, as in the case of 'Ali, a 55-year-old Shiite businessman from Tyre:

> I am a Lebanese Shiite and my wife is a Palestinian but she is also my cousin. Our village on the border became "Lebanese" in 1929 and my grandfather succeeded in registering us. But another brother of his did not succeed. So we have Lebanese and Palestinians in my family. […] Actually, my two sons recently got married to two sisters. The girls are Palestinians and their father, who came to Lebanon in 1967, married the sister of my wife.

Some villages near the border in southern Lebanon, such as Meiss el-Jabal, have a political tradition of militancy and involvement in the Palestinian resistance. A young Palestinian woman with a long veil explained: "My husband, who is very combative, is actually the driver for Sultan Abou Aynayn (PLO representative in southern Lebanon). He was very proud to marry a Palestinian girl." Another example of Shiite military involvement with the Palestinian cause that led to marriage was the case of Kifah, a Palestinian woman who spent six years in Khiam prison, and Mohammed, a Shiite from the South who was imprisoned many years in the same place. When they decided to marry, after their release, Mohammed had to go with his uncle to ask for Kifah's hand:

> On the way to her house, my uncle asked me if I thought it was a good idea to marry a Palestinian girl instead of a Lebanese; I had to tell him that I had just ended a relationship with another fiancée, a Shiite from my village, because she had asked me to stop thinking about politics. For me it was too important to live with my ideals and to share them with someone who could understand. Of course, Kifah could also know better than anyone else what my experience in prison had meant.

They finally had a Shiite marriage – "because I am Shiite", Mohammed explained – although half of Kifah's family had been killed during the war by Shiite Amal militiamen.

It is interesting to note the discrepancy here between the non-religious belief and general attitude of this Shiite fighter and the respect he showed for community tradition by getting married in his own faith

and sect. What happens when a Shiite girl wants to marry a Sunni Palestinian? At first sight it would seem to be almost the same as for the first group of actors living far from Palestinian neighbourhoods and camps: a girl will succeed in getting married if the man accepts the Shiite rites, that is, if he agrees to convert to Shiism. But, in traditional families who live near Palestinians, what makes the difference is the involvement of the Palestinians and, of course, of the Shiite family. Two examples may serve to illustrate this point.

In the first case, one of the major Shiite families in the Bekaa Valley agreed that its only daughter should marry a Palestinian and go to live with him in the Ain el-Hilwa camp near Saida; the Palestinian was a DFLP fedaï, in fact, and the Shiite family was linked to Hizbullah through the girl's uncle, a former leader of the party. In the second case, that of a Shiite family in a village near the border, the daughter expressed a wish to marry a Palestinian farmer. The Shiite family refused, because it believed that if it gave the girl to a Sunni she and forty other members of the family would all go to hell. In the end, a local religious authority allowed them to get married because of the good moral standing of the Palestinian and because of the risk of kidnapping *(ratifeh)* that exists when a girl's family withholds its permission.

Thus, a solution was found in both cases – almost as if the Shiite community was able to accept diversity on conditions specific to each individual situation. In the neighbourhood of Tyre, I came across a woman whose sister had married a Palestinian. She tried to explain to me what mattered most to around her in such marriages across communities: "It's not important whether he's a Sunni. What counts is that the girl should be veiled; it's a question of morality, good morality not religion." This commonsense approach defines the minimum condition for agreement, which does not mean that the marriage implies the Sunni partner's conversion to Shiism. Rather, it is probably involves a kind of social integration.

3. Shiite Post-War Identity

The situation of the Shiites after the war will become clearer if two further aspects are built into the analysis. The first concerns the general perception of marriage with Palestinians in Lebanon and the behaviour of Shiites toward relations between Palestinians and other Lebanese communities. The second is linked to the social and political context of the sixteen years since the end of the war; it will lead us to understand what kind of self-representation this community transmits to its members as well as to other groups.

The relationship between Lebanese and Palestinians has become much harsher than it was before the war, probably almost the same as it was during the 1960s, when, as Sayigh[14] has shown, suspicion was the main attitude towards Palestinians. As far as mixed marriages are concerned, a comparison may shed light on what has changed in these relations and perceptions. In the sixties, Palestinians were perceived as new political actors, and this view became increasingly entrenched after the collapse of the Arab armies in 1967. After a long period of isolation, Palestinians started to marry Lebanese Muslims, not only Christians, expressing a kind of self-confidence due to their new role of fighters against Israel following the defeat of 1967.

It is important for us to understand that Lebanese Muslims were part of this changed Palestinian self-perception. In the period in question, the Shiites were quite marginal and found themselves ostracized by the State; they saw the fedayeen as actively seeking to change their conditions through revolutionary action, not only against Israel but also against the right-wing parties that mainly ruled the country. In many personal life stories, then, marriage with a Palestinian was a political act that reduced the significance of religious differences; even the status of Christian–Muslim couples began to increase because of their involvement in the fight against Israel. To a certain extent, the Shiites

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14 R. Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies. The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon*, London: Zed Books, 1994.

were affected by a kind of secularization, but they were not fully caught up in it because they were already undergoing a development of political consciousness – a late process of identity formation that attached new value and pride to Shiite rituals. We should remember that, at that time, the 'Ashura' tradition was being revived in southern Lebanon[15], or, to be more precise, that after its "importation" into Lebanon in the 1950s this popular rite came to be politicized by Imam Musa al-Sadr and later by Hizbullah. The aspect of martyrdom associated with this process helped them to create a group consciousness among Shiites, and more recently it has allowed Hizbullah to redefine Shiite identity through this cultural dimension.

Shiite involvement in the turmoil of the civil war was marked, on the one hand, by a positive attitude to the Arab cause and the Palestinians but, on the other hand, by an obsessive concern with their own recognition on the political scene. The Amal militia, for its part, acted in the belief that the interest of the Shiite community lay in becoming the true supporters of the Syrians in the civil war. By 1990, however, the picture had completely changed, probably because of the Syrian domination of political life.

Although it may seem that Palestinians are perceived in the same way as in the 1960s, the attitude to marriages is different because they are now contracted mainly between Muslims. This may easily be explained by the fact that a lot of Palestinian Christians were naturalized during the fifties, but on a deeper level it is also a consequence of the war itself: the Christians lived for fifteen years amid words of hatred against the Palestinians. In a recent survey[16] it has been shown that Christian Maronites are the ones in Lebanon who dislike Palestinians the most. But the same survey also shows that the Shiites are the Muslim community in Lebanon that is most unwelcoming towards the Palestinians.

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15 Y. Gonzales-Quijano, "Les interprétations d'un rite: célébrations de la Achoura' au Liban", *Maghreb-Machrek* 115 (1987), 5–28.
16 S. Haddad, "Lebanese Christians' Perceptions on peace with Israel", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 24/3 (2001), 13–33.

This being so, it is curious to note that marriages with Palestinians are quite common in the neighbourhood of the camps, and that it is only people from the Sunni and Shiite communities who marry Palestinians. Even if the Sunni community is much more involved in such relationships and mixed kinship, Shiites represent a significant proportion of these mixed marriages. Such behaviour should be linked to certain effects of the war, for the growth of poverty during the 1980s placed on the same economic level various groups that customarily lived in the same region. This looks like the rebirth of a class attitude that goes beyond the so-called "community-class"[17]. Today people marry Palestinians not because of a political cause but mainly because they share the same living conditions and environment and similar values. What distinguishes Shiites in such situations is the identity of the community. As we have seen above, this identity is always discussed and remains a way for people to express their pride in being Shiites. This last aspect depends on a political discourse that needs to be highlighted.

The Shiite self-image is the result of two processes that occurred at different moments in time. The first relates to the war and explains the conditions under which it was ended. The second explains what has happened since then or, in other words, how the Shiites have developed such a feeling of pride and self-confidence in their community.

During the fifteen years of war, the Shiites of Lebanon underwent a profound change in self-perception as a result of events in their political history. The predominant role of Amal during the 1980s, together with the growing influence of Hizbullah in the Bekaa Valley and southern suburbs of the capital, created a new equilibrium in the Lebanese internal game between the militias and the Syrians. The control that Damascus gradually assumed over these two Shiite militias largely explains why the Shiite community found itself in such a good position within the second organization of the Republican state.

It probably started with the Taif Agreement of 1989, the sequel to the Damascus agreement signed in December 1985. The Shiites obtained

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17　E. Picard, *Liban, Etat de discorde*, Paris: Flammarion, 1988.

powers associated with the presidency of the Council of Parliament and were able to take advantage of the consequent weakening of the Christian position within the presidency[18]. At the same time, while most of the militias were forced to hand in their weapons, the Shiite Hizbullah militia was able to keep them. Somehow everything became clear later in the year, when the Lebanese army compelled the PLO to give back the heavy weapons they had obtained to fight against Israel in southern Lebanon and the former occupied area (850sq/km). Southern Lebanon became transformed into the training ground for a new resistance movement, led by Hizbullah with the approval of the State. The legitimization of this militia in its new role – a role formerly played by Palestinians – went hand in hand with its conversion into a party which, under the same name, entered politics and won seats in the new Parliament in 1992. When Israel later withdrew from the occupied zone, in May 2000, Damascus confirmed this option for Hizbullah as a party/resistance group: the Lebanese army was not allowed to deploy its troops in this area of the national territory, while Hizbullah was given the right to raise its flags and deploy its weapons to maintain the military pressure on Israel. We should note in this connection that the image of resistance against Israel took shape around one of Hizbullah's most prominent figures, Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, whose discourse helped to convey an image of Hizbullah as a moderate and well-organized party. On the other hand, the reconstruction of the country after the civil war gave the Shiite Amal new power in the Council of the South and, more widely, political control in the department *(muhafaza)* of the South. Rivalry at the time between these two Shiite parties actually helped to empower the whole community. Today the Shiite community is the most numerous segment of the Lebanese population, and no other community could challenge it in the domain of politics.

All these activities of the Shiite leadership and parties give every Shiite a sense of pride in belonging to their community. It would not be correct to say that Shiites have acquired a "new" identity since the war: their self-conscious identity simply depends on the context

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18   J. Maïla, "L'accord de Taëf deux ans après", *Les cahiers de l'Orient* 24 (1991), 13–69.

or on a change in the balance of power. Or, as Ahmad Beydoun puts it[19], the strengthening of Shiite community ties has extended the dynamic of community awareness along the lines of what the Maronite community experienced during the first part of the twentieth century. Our study of mixed marriages between Palestinians and Shiites shows such an exogamic attitude in action; Shiite community seems now strong enough to incorporate different actors, and even former enemies.

Conclusion

This article has looked at the heterogeneous dimension of Shiite identity through the example of marriage with Palestinians, stressing the role of shared living conditions and a common history. It has also insisted more on continuity than on any break with the past as a factor in the declaration of community identity. After a brief discussion of the history of political parties over the last two decades, we have used interview material to consider the kinds of relations that Shiites developed with Palestinians and the character of the world they share. At the same time, we have noted the affirmation of Shiite identity as that of a broad group able to integrate other communities and foreigners such as Sunni Palestinians. This leads to a much wider comparison with the relationship of other communities with the Palestinians. Sunnis are the only ones who act like the Shiites with regard to Palestinians. As a matter of fact, the general view is that the Shiites dislike Palestinians, but at a deeper level they feel so powerful and self-confident that marriage with former enemies is no longer a problem. It could even be a kind of inclusive practice that forms part of a long process of identity- building. We would therefore tend to agree with the hypothesis of A. Beydoun, for whom the affirmation of community is a continuing process for Shiites.

19 A. Beydoun, "A Note on Confessionalism", in Th. Hanf, S. Nawaf (eds), *Lebanon in Limbo, Postwar Society and State in an Uncertain Regional Environment*, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2003.

Mariam Abou-Zahab

The Politicization of the Shia Community in Pakistan in the 1970s and 1980s

Shiites played a prominent role in the struggle for Pakistan, but as individuals rather than as Shiites; most of the leaders were in fact westernized and saw politics as a collective secular activity separate from religion. Today, having migrated in large numbers after the partition of the Indian subcontinent, Shiites make up 15 to 20 per cent of the population of Pakistan, or a total of at least 25 million.[1]

Before 1977, the State was neutral and had no sectarian agenda. Shiites were well represented in the army and the federal and local bureaucracy, and there were Shiite ministers in each successive government. Communal disturbances erupted occasionally during the month of Muharram and tensions sometimes led to riots,[2] but most Shiites did not feel discriminated against[3] and their position even improved under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (1971–1977).

The islamization policy of General Zia ul-Haq (1977–1988), based on narrow Sunni interpretations of Islam,[4] alarmed the Shiite commu-

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1   Pakistan has the second largest Shiite community after that of Iran.
2   There were violent clashes in 1956 and 1957, and more than one hundred Shiites were killed in 1963 during sectarian riots in Teri near Khairpur (Sind) and in Lahore.
3   On Shiite activism during this period, see A. Rieck, "The struggle for equal rights as a minority: Shiite communal organizations in Pakistan, 1948–1968", in R. Brunner and W. Ende (eds), *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture & Political History*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, 268–283.
4   On the Zia regime's islamization policies, see A. Iqbal, *Islamisation in Pakistan*, Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1986; Sh. J. Burki and C. Baxter, *Pakistan Under the Military: Eleven Years of Zia ul-Haq*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1991.

nity and contributed to the radicalization of religious identities.[5] At the same time, the Iranian revolution emboldened the Shiites; it also brought about a complete reshaping of the Shiite leadership and empowered a new generation of clerics and students educated in Qom. Traditional ulama linked to Najaf, who were apolitical and concerned only with rituals, found themselves marginalized. Religious mobilization led to political mobilization as the "new Shiites" took control of the community and utilized old structures for political activism. Pakistan, with its sizeable Shiite community, was seen as the mirror of Iran, and in the early 1980s, when Iran was trying to export its revolution, Pakistani Shiites were mobilized as a distinct political group under the charismatic leadership of Allama Arif Hussein al Husseini. The Pakistani government was unable – or unwilling – to restrict the internal impact of these new developments and of regional conflicts. Iranian interference in Pakistani politics was denounced by Sunni militants, while Shiites were seen as disloyal to Pakistan and as a political and geo-strategic threat to Zia's regime. In an effort to contain the Shiite resurgence, Saudi Arabia and Iraq patronized Sunni groups and Pakistan soon became a battlefield in a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The focus of this paper is the growing political mobilization of the Pakistani Shiite community between 1979 and 1988. It will first briefly describe the emergence of the student movement in the 1970s and the religious mobilization following the Iranian revolution, then examine the formation of a political party under the leadership of Allama Husseini, and finally attempt to identify the reasons for the failure of

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5   On these issues, see M.Q. Zaman, "Sectarianism in Pakistan: The Radicalization of Shiite and Sunni Identities", *Modern Asian Studies* 32/3 (1998), 687–716; S.V.R. Nasr, "Islam, the State and the Rise of Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan", in Ch. Jaffrelot (ed.), *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation?*, Delhi: Manohar, 2002, 85–114; M. Abou Zahab, "The Regional Dimension of Sectarian Conflicts in Pakistan", in Jaffrelot, 115–128; M. Abou Zahab, "Sectarianism as a Substitute Identity: Sunnis and Shiites in Central and South Punjab", in S. Mumtaz, J.-L. Racine, Imran Anwar Ali (eds), *Pakistan: The Contours of State and Society*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002, 77–95.

the political movement and the subsequent upsurge in sectarian violence that has plagued Pakistan since the beginning of the 1990s.

Until the end of the 1960s, Shiite students did not engage in student politics as Shiites. Those who were politically conscious supported the Left and were affiliated to the National Students' Organization (NSO), a socialist movement that was in decline by the early 1970s.

In 1966 a Shiite Students' Association was created at King Edward's Medical College in Lahore, but its influence was only marginal and it eventually petered out during the anti-Ayub movement in 1968,[6] when the colleges were closed and students returned to their home towns and villages. The colleges reopened in 1971, but students were kept busy with their exams and all political and union activities remained at a standstill.

The emergence of the Imamia Students' Organization (ISO) in May 1972 was a turning point for the mobilization of Shiite students on a religious basis. Students at the Engineering University contacted students at King Edward's (where Mohammad Ali Naqvi[7] was studying), with the aim of merging five smaller groups into a centralized organization with a unified programme, along the lines of the *Islami Jamiat-e Tulaba* (IJT: Islamic Society of Students), the student wing of the *Jamaat-e islami* (JI). Few joined the new organization at first, however, as Shiites were more attracted to the People's Students Federation (PSF), the student wing of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) that ruled the country from 1971 to 1977. Moreover, Shiite organizations such as the All Pakistan Shiite Conference and the *Idara-e Tahaffuz-e Hoquq-e Shia* (Organization for Safeguarding Shiite Rights in Pakistan) created in 1953,

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6   The formation of the Pakistan People's Party by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in November 1967 was a blow for the Ayub regime as it channelled mounting labour and student unrest against Ayub Khan. Students played a major role in the disturbances, which spread in Punjab and Karachi in 1968. The movement led to the resignation of Ayub Khan in March 1969.

7   Mohammad Ali Naqvi, a medical doctor born in 1952, was the founder and most prominent leader of the ISO. He was assassinated in 1995 by Sunni extremists. For details, see his biography: T.R. Khan, *Safir-e Inqilab* (The ambassador of revolution), Lahore: Al Arif Academy, 1996.

as well as the traditional clergy, were strongly opposed to the creation of the ISO. They feared that it would be a socialist or communist movement directed against the *Jamaat-e islami*, which they did not wish to antagonize. Starting from Lahore, which remained its stronghold till the 1980s, the ISO established itself at the Agricultural University of Faisalabad, then in Multan, Rawalpindi and Peshawar and finally, in 1978, in Karachi (Dow Medical College).[8]

The ISO won its first victory in 1972 during a campaign for a separate syllabus of *Islamiyat* (Islamic studies) for Shiite students, when several of its members were part of a Shiite delegation who met the minister of religious affairs.[9] All Shiite students' organizations were united in 1975 under the banner of the ISO, but the aims were still purely religious and social. ISO members organized rituals and *majalis* (mourning assemblies) on the campus and asked Shiite students to wear a beard; they also helped poor students by providing them with free textbooks, cheap lodging and, if needed, financial assistance. Two categories of students joined the ISO in the 1970s: those who were disappointed with the Left, and those whose traditional families were impressed by the ISO's emphasis on rituals and feared that their children might be corrupted if they joined leftist organizations. From the beginning, caste and class factors played a great role: nearly all the ISO leaders were Syeds belonging to the urban professional middle class or to landed families from South Punjab.

Dr Mohammad Ali Naqvi's links with the ulama brought the ISO on to the international stage. In 1976 the organization started denouncing the ill-treatment of Shiite ulama by the Iraqi government.[10] And,

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8 Shiite militancy in Karachi is of a totally different nature, partly because of the social structure of the community and the emergence in 1984 of the *Muhajir Qaumi Movement* (MQM). Nevertheless, it needs to be considered why, both in Lahore and in Karachi, student activists are mostly recruited in the medical and engineering faculties.

9 Bhutto introduced a separate *Islamiyat* syllabus for Shiites in 1975.

10 In Iraq, the arrests of prominent Shiite ulama and the bans on religious processions culminated in the repression of the "Safar intifada" in February 1977. Syed Mehdi al Hakim, the eldest son of Ayatollah Mohsin al Hakim, accused of being

although few students went to Iran before the revolution, the works of Shariati were translated into Urdu and widely read in the universities. After the fall of the Shah, students became more assertive as they "saw a light coming from Iran". They recognized Ayatollah Khomeini as their *marja-e taqlid* (religious authority) in 1979 and a first ISO delegation visited Iran in 1980.[11] Iranian cultural centres *(khana-e farhang)* in Pakistan became very active, distributing works by prominent ulama translated into Urdu as well as anti-Wahabi literature. Nearly four thousand students received scholarships from the Iranian government to spend a period of six months to a year in religious institutions – mostly in Qom, where they came into contact with Shiite students from the Middle East. By the time of their return to Pakistan they had adopted the doctrine of *wilayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the jurist). Filled with enthusiasm, they toured the countryside in Punjab and the Northern Areas and showed films on the oppression of the Shah's regime and the success of the revolution. They criticized the traditional ulama and their links to Iraq and accused them of being apolitical, quietist and opposed to the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. Although the traditional clergy welcomed the revolution because it had replaced a secular anti-ulama monarchy with a government of the ulama, it was opposed to Khomeini's revolutionary rhetoric and saw the students' activism as a threat to its own authority.

The students also campaigned against the *zakirs* (religious specialists who recite *majalis*), accusing them of being illiterate, spreading lies and concerning themselves only with money-making. There are few real *mujtahids* (ulama authorized to make binding interpretations of

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an Israeli spy, fled into exile in Pakistan in 1970. The Iraqi government also began restricting the visas of all non-Arab seminarians in 1971, so that Pakistani clerics were compelled to leave Najaf. For details, see J. N. Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shiʻas*, Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992, 45–53.

11 There is no *marja-e taqlid* in the Indian subcontinent, and in the 1980s the great majority of the community recognized Ayatollah Khoi as their *marja*.

Islamic law) in Pakistan,[12] but there are many *zakirs*, who may or, more often, may not be well-grounded scholars of Islam. These skilled performers, famed as much, if not more, for their personality and eloquence as for their learning, have always been more important than the *mujtahids* to the religious education of the community, especially as the great majority of the Shiite population in Pakistan accepted *Shaikhiyya* doctrines and gave a very high status to the *ahl-e bait* (the family of the Prophet). The anti-*zakir* campaign of the ISO was thus seen by many as an attack on the very foundation of Shiism as it was practised in South Asia. The traditional clergy, who promoted *Shaikhiyya* beliefs, denounced the campaign against *zakirs* as linked to the so-called "Dhakko party" and accused the students of being Khalisis[13] or Shiite Wahhabis.[14]

Throughout 1979–80, Shiite leaders mobilized the community against the Sunni hanafi laws that General Zia intended to implement. Mufti Jaafar Hussain, a respected apolitical cleric from Gujranwala, resigned in protest from the Council of Islamic Ideology. A Shiite convention held in Bhakkar in April 1979 to protest against the implementation of Sunni hanafi law elected Mufti Jaafar Hussain as *Qaid-e Millat-e Jaafria* (Leader of the Jaafari [i. e Shiite] People). The creation of the *Tehrik-e Nifaz-e Fiqh-e Jaafria* (TNFJ: Movement for the Implementation of Shiite Law) as a religious pressure group was announced during this convention. Mufti Jaafar warned of the launching of a national movement if the government refused to accept the still purely religious Shiite demands: recognition of Shiite law by courts of law and the lifting of restrictions on *azadari* (the distinctively South Asian mourning rituals central to the expression of Shiite religiosity

12 There is no *madrasa* in South Asia where students might follow the full course of religious instruction required to become a *mujtahid*. They have to complete their studies in Iraq or in Iran.

13 Followers of Sheikh Muhammad al Khalisi (1890–1963), a revered Iraqi scholar.

14 On *Shaikhiyya* beliefs and the refutation of them by M. H. Dhakko, see Syed H. A. Naqvi, "The controversy about the Shaikhiyya tendency among Shiite 'Ulama' in Pakistan', in R. Brunner and W. Ende (eds), *op. cit.*, 135–149.

in Pakistan).[15] Tension mounted after the promulgation of the *zakat* (compulsory almsgiving ordinance) in June 1980. Shiites started to realize that, in an Islamic State, their political and religious interests were different from those of the majority. Zia's islamization was seen as the beginning of tyranny, and Shiites felt that they had a duty to revolt against this manipulation of Sunni Islam directed against their interests.

The protests culminated in a three-day siege of Islamabad in July 1980, which those who took part in it saw as a kind of re-creation of Karbala. The ISO played a prominent role in bringing 100,000 Shiites from all over Pakistan to the capital. Students wearing shrouds and shouting *"Ya Hussain"* and *"Zia Yazid"* demonstrated in front of the Iraqi embassy against the assassination on 19 April 1980 of Ayatollah Baqr ul Sadr and his sister Bint al Huda by the Saddam regime. Government buildings were under siege for two days. But Zia ul Haq capitulated after significant Iranian pressure,[16] and an agreement signed on 6 July exempted Shiites from the deduction of *zakat* from their bank accounts.

This was seen as a great victory by the Shiites, who had alone dared to challenge the martial law regime. It brought them into politics, giving them a new visibility and empowerment; huge *imambaras*[17] and *madrasas* were built, in some cases with Iranian money. *Julus* (processions) and *majalis* became occasions for a competition over status and a reaffirmation of the superiority of Shiite beliefs and devotion to the *ahl-e bait*.

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15 See V. J. Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Shi'i Devotional Rituals in South Asia*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993.

16 Shiite leaders asked Ayatollah Khomeini to intervene. Khomeini warned Zia that, if he continued to persecute Pakistani Shiites, he would meet the same fate as the Shah of Iran. For a detailed first-hand account of the Islamabad events, see Brigadier Syed A. I. Tirmazi, *Profiles of Intelligence*, Lahore: Fiction House, 1995, 272–283.

17 Also called *imambargahs*, the name given to Shiite mosques in South Asia.

In response to these developments, which they regarded as provocative, Sunnis castigated Shiites as *kafirs* (infidels) – on the grounds that *zakat* is a pillar of Islam – and denounced the Iranian revolution as a Zionist conspiracy to capture holy places. Leaflets citing nineteenth-century Deobandi fatwas that had declared Shiites to be *kafirs* were pasted up on the walls. A large amount of Saudi-funded sectarian literature began to appear: for instance, *Shiites and Shiis* by Ehsan Elahi Zaheer[18] (head of the *Ahl-e Hadith*[19] party), a book published in 1980 in Lahore denouncing Shiites as *kafirs* and Zionist agents,[20] and *Imam Khomeini aur Shiaya* (Imam Khomeini and Shiism) with a foreword by the head of the *Nadwat ul ulama* school of Lucknow – closely linked to the *Rabita-e Alam-e Islami* (World Islamic League) – were translated into English and Arabic and distributed by Saudi embassies around the world. The government sought to contain Shiite activism and Iranian influence by strengthening Sunni institutions. *Madrasas* funded by foreign donors were established across Pakistan, and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) organized Sunni militant groups to contend with the "Shiite problem".[21]

The riots in Karachi in 1983 were orchestrated by the *Sawad-e Azam-e Ahl-e Sunnat* (The Great Sunni Majority), an Iraqi-funded movement led by Pathan extremists that was the precursor of the *Sipah-e Sahaba Pakistan* (SSP: Army of the Companions of the Prophet-Pakistan) created in Punjab in 1985. Anti-Shiite riots in Kurram Agency and Gilgit in 1986 were seen as acts of revenge sponsored by the Zia regime to teach Shiites a lesson.

Mufti Jaafar had given his community a degree of unity, but his death in 1983 led to a split between the traditional quietists and the modern reformists. Radicals saw this split as a conspiracy by Pakistani intelligence to weaken the community and divide it along the lines of

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18 He was assassinated in 1985 by a member of the ISO.

19 The *Ahl-e Hadith* deny the legitimacy of the classical schools of law, insisting on the Quran and the hadith as the exclusive sources of guidance.

20 Sunni sectarian literature describes Shiism as a creation of the Jews to destroy Islam.

21 See note 2.

the Sunni division between Deobandi and Barelvi.[22] Traditional ulama strongly opposed to the ISO, whom they described as a group of "wahhabis bent on destroying the faith", campaigned for the election of Maulana Syed Hamid Ali Musavi, a cleric from Rawalpindi with Shaikhi leanings, to replace Mufti Jaafar.[23] At the same time, the ISO and the new generation of Qom-educated clerics united around the charismatic leadership of Allama Arif Hussein al Husseini and elected him as *Qaid-e Millat-e Jaafria* at a convention in Bhakkar in February 1984. Musavi's followers did not recognize Husseini's election and formed a TNFJ splinter faction concerned only with *azadari* that was willing to compromise with the Zia regime. Thus, Musavi and his followers enjoyed the support of General Zia and the army, whose aim it was to divide the community. Whereas the traditional clergy launched a campaign against Allama Husseini, describing him as this "Pathan nominated as head of the community who is against *azadari*", he received the support of Hassan Taheri, Khomeini's official representative in Pakistan. Husseini tried in vain to bring about a reconciliation between the two groups, but Musavi rejected his offer to refer the problem to Ayatollah Khomeini or Ayatollah Khoi.

Allama Husseini, a Turi Pashtun[24] born in Parachinar (Kurram Agency) in 1946, was educated in Najaf and Qom.[25] In the early 1970s he stood apart from other Pakistani students in Iraq as a disciple of Ayatollah Khomeini.[26] He travelled to Pakistan to marry in 1973, and

22 Deobandis are followers of the reformist school of thought associated with the *madrasa* founded in 1867 at Deoband (North India) which aimed at purifying Indian Islam of "un-Islamic" practices. Barelvis, who represent traditional Islam centred on the shrines, revere the Prophet and the saints as sources of guidance and vehicles of mediation between God and human beings.

23 The embassy of Iraq published an announcement in the daily *Jang* congratulating Musavi on his election.

24 The great majority of the Pashtuns are Sunnis, except for the Turi and sections of the Orakzai and Bangash, who are Shiites.

25 For details of his biography, see T. R. Khan, *Safir-e Noor* (Ambassador of light), Lahore: Al Arif Academy, 1994.

26 According to his "official" biography, he was the only Pakistani to protest against the festivities in Persepolis in 1971.

the next year, because of his political activities, the Iraqi authorities refused to issue him with a visa enabling him to return to Najaf. He then went to Qom, where he studied under Ayatollah Murtaza Mottahari, among others. Although he wished to stay in Qom, he was sent back to Pakistan in 1977 with a mission to mobilize the community on the pattern of what Imam Musa Sadr had done in Lebanon. Allama Husseini was the first cleric to recite a *majlis* in Pashto, in Peshawar in 1977. In 1978 he mobilized the students to organize a demonstration against the Shah of Iran in Peshawar, and he launched a social movement in the semi-autonomous Kurram Tribal Agency against the *maliks* (tribal representatives) and the Political Agent representing the federal government), which led to his arrest and detention. He created the Alamdar Foundation, a group of young people dedicated to social welfare and the fight against drugs, and also opened a school and a hospital in his hometown of Parachinar with funds collected from local Shiites working in the Gulf. After the Islamabad agreement of July 1980, Allama Husseini became a member of the Supreme Council of the TNFJ and started working in close cooperation with the ISO. He used to say that ISO members were his wings and that he could not fly without them.

After his nomination as Khomeini's *wakil* (representative) in Pakistan, Allama Husseini gained legitimacy not only in Pakistan but in the eyes of the Shiite community internationally. Traditionally the *maraji* of Iraq and Iran authorized their *wakils* in South Asia to collect *khoms* (religious tax of one fifth of income incumbent on all faithful Shiites) and to spend it for the benefit of the community. Allama Husseini could now, as the representative of the *wali-e faqih*, intervene in political and religious affairs.

Allama Husseini transformed the TNFJ from a religious pressure group into a non-sectarian political party advocating *"ittihad bain al Muslimin"* (unity among Muslims), in order to fight tyranny and establish a just Islamic order. Openly at war with the Zia regime, he accused it of being the agency of American imperialism in the region and of "busily spreading *fitna* (internal discord) and sectarian troubles in Pakistan at the behest of the Nejdis"[27] while Muslims were op-

27   The Saudi regime.

pressed in Palestine, Afghanistan, Kashmir, India, Eritrea and the Philippines.

Allama Husseini's call for a boycott of the referendum in December 1984 made it clear to Zia that he would not limit himself to defending the rights of the Shiite community. When the information minister announced in the same month that the government had implemented the Islamabad agreement, Allama Husseini protested and called a press conference in Lahore to announce the entry of the TNFJ into politics: "We have formed a committee for the restoration of democracy which will contact the other parties and will elaborate an agenda to put an end to imperialism." He visited a number of cities to win Shiites over to his new policy, which he explained clearly at one of the rallies:

> We have two types of problems, first as Shiites and then as Pakistanis. If we want to solve our religious problems without taking into account our political problems, it is absolutely certain that we will fail notwithstanding our efforts because these problems cannot be taken separately. If we remain apart from other Muslims at both national and international level, we will not only shirk our legal responsibility but go against the Koran and Islam. If we separate the political problems from the religious ones, the results will be terrible. The link between religion and politics is very deep and we must deal with them together.

The movement grew more radical after the Quetta incidents of July 1985. Shiites had been demonstrating each year on 6 July to denounce the non-implementation of the Islamabad agreement of July 1980, but in 1985 the demonstrations turned violent in Quetta and resulted in at least 15 deaths and more than a thousand arrests. It was again a re-creation of Karbala: water and electricity were cut off in the Shiite neighbourhoods and a curfew enforced for sixteen days. This was denounced by Allama Husseini as an act of revenge by the Zia regime for the fact that the TNFJ had called for a boycott of the referendum in December 1984. The Quetta incidents transformed a moderate religious pressure group into a militant movement and paved the way for its transformation into a full-fledged political party.

On 6 July 1987 in Lahore, Allama Husseini announced the transformation of the TNFJ into a political party. He said that, by fighting

only for their religious rights and remaining aloof from politics, Shiites had been marginalized and considered unimportant. The charter of the *Sabiluna* party (*Hamara Rasta*, Our way) is very similar to the charter of the Lebanese party Amal. It advocates the Iranian model and claims that American imperialism is the cause of Pakistan's ills. Allama Husseini called on all Pakistanis to join him to fight injustice and exploitation and to rid the country of American imperialism and western influence. He gave a new definition of "true religion", which embraced political, social and economic issues.

A kind of "qomization" of Pakistan took place under the charismatic leadership of Allama Husseini. Rituals *(majalis, julus, dua-e komail)* were rationalized on the Iranian pattern, and the didactic part of the *majlis* centred on *ibadat* (religious observances) and *aqidat* (dogma) was extended at the expense of *masaib* (or *gham*[28]). *Majalis* were also politicized, as Mohsin Naqvi[29] and Irfan Haider Abidi gave speeches depicting Zia as Yazid or an American agent and describing martial law as a war against God and His Prophet. Young clerics focused in their sermons on *mazlumiyat* (oppression), referring to the enemies of Shiism and to the experiences of Shiites in Iran, Lebanon and the Gulf. Iranian diplomats openly participated in rituals, and the stalls erected in front of the *imambaras* sold Iranian books and cassettes. A pan-Islamic sentiment gained ground after the Iranian revolution: the Karbala paradigm was constantly reinterpreted and linked to Palestine, Kashmir and Bosnia. Religious symbolism was used to justify political action under the slogan *Kul yom Ashura, kul ardh Karbala* (Every day is Ashura, the whole earth is Karbala). Boys and girls educated in Qom adopted Iranian-style dress, and black cloaks, black turbans and *hijab* became commonplace. Iranian rhetoric (*taghut* [despotism, tyranny], *mustazafin* [dispossessed], *mazlumiyat*) was used and slogans such as *Amerika murdabad* (Death to America), *Islam ka dushman Amerika* (America is the enemy of Islam), *Pakistan ka dushman Amerika* (America is the en-

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28 The final portion of a *majlis* in which the *zakir* evokes the incidents of Karbala and induces tears of grief in the congregation.

29 Assassinated later by Sunni extremists.

emy of Pakistan), *Russia murdabad* (Death to Russia) and *Israel murdabad* (Death to Israel) were heard after prayers in Shiite mosques. Just as in Iran, *Yom al Quds* (Jerusalem's Day) was celebrated by the ISO on the last Friday of Ramadan and *Yom marg bar Amerika* (Death to America's Day) on 16 May, when children dressed in fatigues would trample on Israeli and American flags.[30]

The transformation of the TNFJ into a political party was met with hostility by other Shiite organizations, which claimed that the party's charter was an expression of communism and contrary to the Koran and the Sunna. The divide between old (or black) and new (or Wahhabi) Shiites became deeper: the new generation accused the traditional clergy of being passive, of spending its time lamenting and waiting for the *mahdi*, whereas the Iranian revolution had shown that the world could be changed.

During the hajj in 1988, Dr Mohammad Ali Naqvi and several other Shiite leaders were arrested by the Saudi authorities and deported to Pakistan. At the same time, pressure was exerted on Allama Husseini to tone down his rhetoric: the American authorities grew alarmed, and on 4 August a religious dignitary returning from the hajj conveyed a message to him that the Saudi government's patience was exhausted and that he should keep a low profile. Finally, on 6 August 1988, Allama Hussaini was assassinated in Peshawar, most probably at Riyadh's instigation and with the collusion of General Zia's aide de camp.

On 4 September 1988, Allama Sajid Naqvi was elected to replace him. From then on, the TNFJ lost its revolutionary zeal and became more moderate and pragmatic. It entered into an alliance with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) for the elections of October 1988 and changed its name in 1993 to *Tehrik-e Jaafria Pakistan* (TJP: Jaafri Movement of Pakistan). The TJP failed to unite the Shiite community and a number of splinter groups developed as a result; some of these were violent, like the *Sipah-e Mohammad* (SMP: Army of Mohammad), whose young militants believed that the TJP was too moderate and did not protect the community against Sunni extremists.

30   *Yom al Quds* and *Yom marg bar Amerika* are still celebrated by the ISO in Karachi.

Several factors may explain the failed mutation from a sectarian group into a political party. Under the leadership of Allama Husseini, Shiites in Pakistan forgot that they are only a small minority and that, living as they do in a complex religious environment that mostly disagrees with their beliefs and practices, their position cannot be compared with that of fellow-Shiites in Iran; the public nature of *azadari* also means that Shiites impinge upon the religious sensitivities of the larger Sunni community. The new generation of ulama supported by the students emerged as a new power centre, and the activism they generated was perceived as a threat by Sunnis. Although Barelvis share their devotion to *ahl-e bait*, Shiites could never gain their support against Deobandi extremists who wanted them declared *kafirs*; Barelvis simply stayed neutral. Their new found assertiveness after the Iranian revolution and the impact of regional conflicts on the domestic scene led to the rise of sectarian violence, which has continued unabated since the early 1990s.

The heterogeneous nature of the community must also be considered in an analysis of the reasons for failure. Ethnic and linguistic divisions exist among Punjabis, Pathans, Baltistanis and Urdu-speaking Muhajirs of Karachi. Rituals and practices take different forms from one region to another and are a significant source of controversy: Muharram rituals in Karachi, largely imported from North India, are different from Muharram rituals in Lahore and even more from those performed in rural Punjab or the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). In a place like Jhang, which was a hotbed of sectarian violence in the early 1990s, there is not only a deep division between Sunnis and Shiites but also a cleavage inside the Shiite community between locals and Muhajirs for reasons partially linked to ritual and linguistic differences; the locals are rural and Siraiki-speaking, while the Muhajirs are urban and Urdu-speaking.

Pakistani society is highly fragmented, and so caste and class divisions are also part of the explanation. The traditional clergy belongs to prestigious religious families from Punjab or to families who migrated from North India after Partition. This caste-conscious and class-conscious establishment, linked to the big feudal families, felt threatened

by the emergence of quite young new leaders who, though claiming to be Syeds, came from a totally different social and ethnic background. The people around Allama Husseini were Pashtuns from a modest rural background in the tribal areas, and their families were not part of the religious establishment; many student activists belonged to lower middle-class families from rural Punjab or were recently urbanized. This was not an acceptable situation to the traditional clergy. Moreover, the opposition between Musavi's and Husseini's followers also reflected a class conflict: the status gained by Qom-educated clerics and their appropriation of a religious discourse for social liberation[31] threatened the status quo. Allama Hussaini wanted to give the ulama the leading role: he wanted them to replace the feudal lords and the politicians as leaders of the community. The influence of the feudal lords diminished but, on the whole, they managed to keep the activists' influence away from the countryside and to preserve the status quo.

The caste factor also played a prominent role inside the TNFJ (later TJP). While the "old" Shiites referred to the Shiite community as *Millat-e Jaafria*, the "new" Shiites insisted on using the word *Qaum* (nation) which, interestingly, is also the one used for caste or tribe in Pakistan. This terminological preference implied that they were first Shiites and that they identified with the Shiite community worldwide. Allama Husseini used to say: "We are first Shiite and then Pakistanis" but, as is nearly always the case in Pakistan, the local prevailed over the global and caste and class differences remained an obstacle in the way of unity[32].

But probably the main reason for the failure is that clerics educated in Iran had no experience of the Pakistani political system; they entered politics without knowing its dynamics. Unable to act independently of

31 It should be recalled that Punjabi society is very hierarchical and caste-conscious, whereas Pashtun tribal society is much more egalitarian. The fact that Allama Husseini was a Pashtun (and Sajid Naqvi a Punjabi) should not be underestimated when analysing the evolution of the TNFJ, all the more as the same phenomenon may be observed in other parties.

32 Sajid Naqvi is often blamed for favouring the naqvis. This caste bias is not limited to the Shiites; it is also prevalent in the Deobandi and Wahabi jihadi movements operating in Kashmir.

Iran, they were eliminated from sensitive posts and subjected to discrimination in the army and the state bureaucracy. They also suffered the backlash of the Afghan conflict, and they soon lost their political positions at a time when the Pakistani government was seriously at odds with Iran.

In the 1990s, as dissatisfaction with Sajid Naqvi's style of leadership increased and gave rise to violent splinter groups, Iran stopped its counterproductive funding of the TJP and the ISO.[33] The "new" Shiites felt betrayed as they became aware that Iran had been using them for its own political interests. Pakistani Shiites continue to pay a heavy price for their shattered dream. They find themselves without a sense of direction, while sectarian assassinations have claimed the lives of religious dignitaries, of ordinary citizens whose only fault is to have a Shiite name, and of hundreds of Shiite doctors, lawyers and businessmen. It has reached a point where some commentators say that the risk of being killed is now an occupational hazard for Shiite professionals in Pakistan.

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33 A dozen Iranian diplomats and military officers have been killed in Pakistan by
    Sunni extremists.

*Rituals and Social Practices
as Identity Markers*

Yitzhak Nakash

The Muharram Rituals and the Cult of the Saints among Iraqi Shiites

This article seeks to shed light on the specific features of Shiite Islam and society in Iraq, through an examination of the Muharram rituals and the cult of the saints. The argument is that the moral and cultural values of Iraqi Shiites were built into their religious practices. Unlike the Persian majority in Iran, whose conversion to Shiism took place during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Shiites of Iraq are by and large of recent Arab tribal origin. The Arab tribal value system of Shiite society in Iraq was encapsulated by Shiite religion, not permeated by it. This is evident in the way Iraqi Shiites observed the Muharram rituals, and in the images they attached to the imams and other Shiite saints.

The Muharram Rituals

Perhaps no other single event in Islamic history has played so central a role in shaping Shiite identity as the martyrdom of Husayn and his companions at Karbala, whose evocation informs the annual rituals of remembrance in the month of Muharram. Over a period of twelve centuries, five major rituals developed around the battle of Karbala: the memorial services, the representation of the battle in the form of a play, the flagellation, the public mourning processions, and the visiting of Husayn's tomb particularly on the day of 'Ashura' and the fortieth day after the battle.[1]

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1   Y. Nakash, "An Attempt to Trace the Origin of the Rituals of *'Ashura'*", *Die Welt des Islams* 33 (1993), 161–82.

The Muharram observances assumed many forms, reflecting the diverse cultures and ethnic groups among which they developed. In Iraq, they were closely connected to the process of formation of modern Iraqi Shiite society, which took place mainly during the nineteenth century as Iraq's nomadic tribes settled down and took up agriculture.[2] In contrast to Iran, where the Muharram rites were observed in public from the sixteenth century, Shiites maintain that before the Ottomans resumed direct control of Iraq in 1831 the Mamluks prohibited the commemoration of 'Ashura' in the country. This ban probably affected the mixed cities of Baghdad, Basra, Kazimayn and Samarra in particular, where government control was more effective. As a result, the memorial services *(majalis al-ta'ziya)* were held in underground cellars inside private houses.[3] While I do not have any data about Karbala, it seems that before the nineteenth century the services were also observed in Najaf on a very limited scale. The first known person to have widely promoted the services in Najaf during Ottoman rule was said to be Sheikh Nassar ibn Ahmad al-'Abbasi (d. around 1824/5). Apparently he seized the opportunity of the Ottoman-Iranian peace treaty, signed in 1821, to announce the sponsorship of memorial services in his home. In subsequent years, this practice gained impetus as many other people, in Najaf and elsewhere, followed 'Abbasi's example.[4]

The commemorations were closely connected with the narration of the events of Karbala (the *rawza-khwani*, known also in Iraq as *qraya*, a colloquial form of *qira'a*). Visiting Najaf and Karbala in 1887, the Iranian Sufi *'alim* Pirzadeh described the various forms of the *rawza-khwani* in both cities. From his account it is clear that by that time the services were not confined to houses alone but were also held in mosques, reli-

2   Y. Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 2nd ed., Princeton, 2003, 25–48.
3   On Kazimayn see A. B. Tihrani, *Tabaqat a'lam al-shi'a*, 5 vols., Najaf and Beirut, 1954–1971, 2: 170. On Baghdad see 'A. al-Wardi, *Lamahat ijtima'iyya min ta'rikh al-'Iraq al-hadith*, 6 vols., Baghdad, 1969–1978, 2: 110–11.
4   A. B. Tihrani, *Al-Dhari'a ila tasanif al-shi'a*, 26 vols., Tehran and Najaf, 1936–1986, 9,1: 32; 'A. al-Khaqani, *Shu'ara' al-Ghari aw al-najafiyyat*, 2nd ed., 12 vols., Qum, 1988, 12: 324; J. al-Mahbuba, *Madi al-Najaf wa-hadiruha*, 3 vols., Najaf, 1955–1958, 3: 479.

gious schools and the shrines themselves. The nature of the recitations, and the language used by the leader of the sermon (the *rawza-khwan*, known in Iraq also as the *m'amman*) differed, being a reflection of the specific ethnic composition, geographical origin and class attributes of the participating audience. Thus, groups of pilgrims from Na'in, Azerbaijan, and India each conducted its own service according to the custom observed in their home country, exhibiting various degrees of religious piety.[5]

The poetry used in the recitations reflected the moral values and ethnic attributes of the various Shiite communities. The majority of Iraq's Shiite population were Arabs of nomadic origin and only recent converts to Shiite Islam. The attributes of ideal manhood of the Arabs *(muruwwa)* – i.e., masculinity, courage, pride, honour and chivalry – played a dominant role in shaping their moral values and world view. The strong Arab tribal character of Shiite society in Iraq was evident in two major genres in Iraqi colloquial poetry, the *abudhiyya* and the *hosa*. Whereas the former was used among the tribesmen mainly to describe excellence and prestige, the latter was commonly used on occasions of grief, as well as in tribal ceremonies and wars as a means of emphasizing glory and generating enthusiasm. It was only natural that these two genres were also used extensively in the Iraqi Shiite poetry that developed around the theme of the battle of Karbala.[6]

The strong Arab tribal character of Iraqi Shiite society found embodiment in the image of 'Abbas, son of the imam 'Ali and Husayn's half-brother, as portrayed in the Arabic texts, poetry, and plays that narrated and re-enacted the affairs of 'Ashura'. Early Shiite accounts of the battle (tenth and thirteenth centuries) mention 'Abbas very briefly as one of Husayn's companions who was killed while attempting to bring water to him from the Euphrates. Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani (d. 967)

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5   Hajji Pirzadeh, *Safarnama-yi Hajji Pirzadeh*, 2 vols., Tehran, 1963, 1: 350–52.
6   'A. al-Khaqani, *Funun al-adab al-sha'bi*, 8 vols., Baghdad, 1962–1968, 1: 7, 55, and 2: 38–39. See also A. Kovalenko, "Le martyre de Husayn dans la poésie populaire d'Iraq", Ph.D. diss., Université de Genève, 1979, 170, 174.

adds that 'Abbas was a handsome man, and that he rode a noble horse and carried Husayn's banner.[7] By contrast, in nineteenth-century and twentieth-century Arab Shiite accounts, the character of 'Abbas is well developed and he emerges as a central figure in the battle. It is related that the imam 'Ali desired a son who would excel in horse racing. He therefore took a Bedouin woman from the tribe of Kilab, whose father was considered the bravest man and best rider among all the Arab tribes. His eldest son, 'Abbas, did indeed excel in horse racing, and possessed the ideal attributes of chivalry and heroism. 'Abbas loved his brother Husayn and defended him in the battle of Karbala. When Husayn urged his family members and followers to flee before it was too late, 'Abbas answered him: "We shall not do that, for how can we live after your death?"[8]

The Arabic texts and poetry of the memorial services emphasized the strong physical attributes of 'Abbas, comparing him to a fearless lion. Indeed, he is not presented as a symbol of religious piety, but rather as the protector of Husayn, the Hashimite family, and religion. The audience is told not only that 'Abbas rode a noble horse and carried the banner of Husayn, but also that, on account of his stature, his tall legs left a mark on the ground even when he was riding his horse. At the battle of Karbala, 'Abbas demonstrated his courage by taking upon himself the dangerous mission of breaking the siege of Husayn's camp and bringing water to his thirsty brother, and to the women and children. 'Abbas was attacked by several warriors, but he managed to

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7   A. ibn A'tham al-Kufi, *Kitab al-futuh*, 8 vols., Beirut, 1986, 3: 129; Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil al-talibiyyin*, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1970, 84–85; M. ibn Ja'far ibn Nima al-Hilli, *Muthir al-ahzan*, Najaf, 1950, 53–54; R. 'Ali ibn Musa ibn Ta'us, *Al-Luhuf fi qatla al-tufur*, Tehran, 1904, 77–78, 103–104. 'Abbas is also mentioned briefly in the account provided by the Sunni historian al-Tabari (d. 923): Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh al-Tabari*, 11 vols., Cairo, 1960–1963, 5: 412.

8   'A. al-Musawi al-Muqarram, *Al-'Abbas ibn al-imam amir al-mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib*, Najaf, n. d., 69; M. al-Amin, *A'yan al-shi'a*, 56 vols., Beirut, 1960–1963, 37: 75–80.

scatter them "like a wolf dispersing a flock of sheep". Although he was later ambushed and his right hand cut off, he continued to fight bravely. Holding the sword in his left hand, he faced his attackers chanting:

> By God, even though you cut off my right hand
> I shall forever defend my religion
> And I shall [protect] an absolutely true imam [Husayn]
> the grandson of the righteous and trustworthy Prophet.

'Abbas was finally overcome by his attackers, and this, the audience is told, was the turning point in the battle. Learning of the death of 'Abbas, Husayn is described as saying: "Now my back has been broken and my strength has diminished."[9]

As the memorial services spread in Iraq in the nineteenth century, families and individuals began to sponsor them, not only as an expression of religious piety but also to gain esteem and social status.[10] Studying the Shiite tribe al-Shabana and the rural community of Daghara in southern Iraq between 1956 and 1958, the Ferneas observed that individuals sponsored recitations as a sign of status and in fulfillment of a vow. The month of Ramadan, and the period in the Islamic calendar between Muharram up to the 20th of Safar, were especially favoured for holding the sessions. Their length depended on the host and how much he could afford to spend. The Sheikh of al-Shabana, for example, used to engage the services of a reader for an entire month. The women of government officials also used to host recitations for the women of the community. This occasion afforded women a unique

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9 See the poetry of the *rawza-khwan* Salih al-Hilli, in 'A. al-Khaqani, *Shu'ara' al-Hilla aw al-babiliyyat*, 5 vols., Baghdad, 1951–1953, 3: 181–82, 190–92. See also Muqarram, *Al-'Abbas*, 162–63; S. al-Jawahiri, *Muthir al-ahzan fi ahwal al-a'imma al-ithna 'ashara*, Najaf, 1966, 83–84; H. al-Bahrani, *Al-Fawadih al-husayniyya wa al-qawadih al-bayyiniyya*, 2nd ed., Najaf: n.d., 319–20; M. al-Amin, *Al-Majalis al-saniyya fi manaqib wa masa'ib al-'itra al-nabawiyya*, 5 vols., Damascus, 1954, 1: 138–44; 'A. Kashif al-Ghita', *Al-Anwar al-husayniyya wa al-sha'a'ir al-islamiyya*, 2 pts., Bombay, 1927/8, 2: 62–65.

10 Wardi, *Lamahat*, 2: 111.

opportunity to assemble together and to attend a social event that extended beyond their immediate neighbourhood.[11]

The recitations highlighted the important role of the *rawza-khwan* in re-enactment of the battle of Karbala. Pirzadeh, writing of one in Najaf, reported that the narrator, much like a preacher, would use moving language to bring his audience to tears and to transform their state of mind.[12] Particularly in Najaf and Karbala, the profession of *rawza-khwani* provided social esteem and income for many low-ranking ulama, whose livelihood depended on the number of sermons they delivered. Indeed, even in the twentieth century it was still quite a common practice for *'ulama'* and sayyids from the two cities to perform as narrators during the month of Ramadan and the first ten days of Muharram, both in villages and in the houses of sheikhs and other people who could afford to pay for the service.[13] Some *'ulama'* were more highly sought after and paid accordingly, the criteria being their command of Arabic rhetoric and the intensity with which they coerced the mourners into weeping.

The representation of the battle of Karbala in the form of a play (the *shabih*) was transmitted from Iran to the shrine cities in Iraq. Relying on local informants, the writer of a British report on Muharram observances in Kazimayn indicated that this ritual was introduced into the city in the late eighteenth century.[14] The permission given in 1831 by the governor 'Ali Rida to hold the memorial services, and the arrival of large numbers of Iranian pilgrims at the shrine cities, probably helped the spread of the play in Iraq. Najafis maintain that during the nineteenth century the *shabih* was performed in mosque courtyards before

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11 R. Fernea, *Sheikh and Effendi: Changing Patterns of Authority Among the El Shabana of Southern Iraq*, Cambridge, Mass., 1970, 70–71; E. Fernea, *Guests of the Sheik*, 2nd ed., New York, 1969, 113.

12 Pirzadeh, *Safarnama*, 1: 331, 336–37.

13 Extract from Special Service Officer, Basra, Report no. 484/6, 16 April 1925, Air 23/379; 'A. al-Wardi, *Wu"az al-salatin*, Baghdad, 1954, 71; 'A. al-Bayati, *Al-Rashidiyya: dirasa antrobolojiyya ijtima'iyya*, Najaf, 1971, 124–25.

14 Intelligence Report no. 21, 15 September 1921, FO 371/6353/11315.

the city's notables and sayyids. At times, even Ottoman soldiers based in the city would take part in it.[15]

There were fundamental differences in the scope, the metaphors and the theatrical forms of the play in Iraq, as compared with its Iranian counterpart. The dialogues in the Iraqi play were minimal, and it is doubtful whether any textual format was ever developed, let alone published. Among the rural and tribal communities the play often took the form of a carnival. The impact on the audience was achieved largely through the use of live metaphors, the movement of the characters, and the participation of many players drawn from the local population. In contrast to Iraq, the texts and theatrical dimensions of the play in Iran were highly developed.

Elizabeth Fernea described the *shabih* held in the Shiite village of Sufra in southern Iraq. The occasion, which also drew people from the neighbouring villages and tribal settlements, took place in an open field, with as many as sixty costumed players riding horses. The players were divided into two groups representing the camps of Husayn and Ibn Sa'd. The audience was involved in the re-enactment of the battle. Men and women cheered the forces of Husayn and hissed those of Ibn Sa'd. The play culminated in the passing of rifles from the audience to the players, who would then shoot bullets over each other's heads.[16] Another account of a *shabih* in a mixed village in southern Iraq illustrates how the strong physical attributes of 'Abbas were exhibited in the play. Mahmud al-Durra, a Sunni who served as chief of staff of the Iraqi army for some time from late 1938, described in his memoirs the play as celebrated in al-Bughayla al-Nu'maniyya. As a child in that village, he was particularly impressed by the figure of 'Abbas, who was "chopping off the heads of his Umayyad opponents, exhibiting rare fearlessness and bravery".[17]

15 T. A. 'Ali al-Sharqi, *Al-Najaf al-ashraf: 'adatuha wa-taqaliduha*, Najaf, 1978, 234.
16 E. Fernea, *Guests*, 203–04, 206.
17 M. al-Durra, *Hayat 'iraqi min wara' al-bawwaba al-sawda'*, Cairo, 1976, 23–24.

Both Fernea and al-Durra make it clear that the moral values and cultural attributes of the tribesmen were built into the play itself. Fernea, in particular, shows the transformation of a traditional *hosa* into a type of *shabih*. The *hosa* was the most common form of celebration among the Arab tribes of southern Iraq – a clamorous reception on the occasion of weddings, circumcisions and holidays, also intended to signal death and to announce war.[18] The fusion between *shabih* and *hosa* following the conversion of the tribesmen is evidence that Shiism did not fully permeate Iraqi tribal values and social practices.

While face-slapping was a traditional symbol for personal grief and pain in Arab societies, the practice of flagellation was not observed in the shrine cities before the nineteenth century. It included the use of swords and knives for head-cutting *(tatbir)*, chain-flagellation *(zinjil)* and harsh breast-beating. Werner Ende cites the Iraqi Shiite *mujtahid* Muhammad Mahdi Qazwini, who claimed around 1927 that the use of iron had been initiated "about a century ago" by people not well versed in the rules of the *shari'a.*[19] Also, Iraqi Shiite advocates of flagellation do not seem able to point to any unambiguous reference to the practice in the works of pre-nineteenth-century *mujtahids.* The first clear mention is a reference to Sheikh Khidr ibn Shallal Al Khuddam al-'Afkawi al-Najafi (d. 1839/40), who is cited by 'Abd al-Rida Kashif al-Ghita' as having written in a work entitled *Abwab al-jinan wa-basha'ir al-ridwan* (The Gates to Paradise and the Good Omens for Delight):

> It is permissible to flagellate for [Husayn's] sake and to mourn his death in any manner even if [the flagellant] knows that he would die on account of it […]. Many people consider life less valuable than money, which the [Shiite] religious creed, on account of its own needs, ordered people to spend excessively for [Husayn's] commemoration and for his visitation.[20]

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18 For details of the *hosa* see Bayati, *Al-Rashidiyya*, 106; 'A. al-'Azzawi, *'Asha'ir al-'Iraq*, 4 vols., Baghdad, 1937–1956, 3: 72.

19 W. Ende, "The Flagellations of Muharram and the Shi'ite 'Ulama", *Der Islam* 55 (1978), 27–28.

20 'A. Kashif al-Ghita', *Al-Anwar al-husayniyya*, 2: 71.

Ibn Shallal, it should be noted, is described by Shiite biographers as a "pious ascetic". According to Agha Buzurg Tihrani, he related that he wrote *Abwab al-jinan* (probably around 1826/7) with a pen he received in a dream from the imam 'Ali. Ibn Shallal himself also recounted that this work was not in line with the accepted norms of that time.[21]

Distinctions should be drawn among the various forms and symbolic meanings of flagellation in Iraq, among the ethnic and group attributes of the participants, and among the types of reward they sought. To cut the head with a sword or knife was the most violent self-infliction of injury, but it was not widespread and the number of participants in this act was usually small. Thus, a British report on 'Ashura' in Najaf in 1919 mentions a party of only one hundred who engaged in head-cutting.[22]

The practice of head-cutting was transmitted to the shrine cites in the nineteenth century by Shiites of Turkish origin and was confined in Iraq mainly to Shiite Turks and Persians. Najafi oral history relates that head-cutting was not observed in Karbala and Najaf before the mid-nineteenth century. It was first practised in Iraq by Shiite pilgrims from the Caucasus, Azerbaijan or Tabriz; they were probably Qizilbash who arrived in Karbala with their personal weapons, notably swords *(qamat)*, which they used for head-cutting. It is also said that, when head-cutting appeared in Najaf sometime in the 1850s, the organizers and participants were drawn mainly from among the Turkish and Persian residents of the town;[23] British, Shiite and Sunni descriptions of this ritual indicate that Arabs did not take part in it. Thus, Thomas Lyell, who served for some time there as a British officer, wrote that "in Najaf, which is full of Persians, this ceremony is largely confined to them, more particularly to the Turcoman tribe". The Iraqi Shiite poet Kazim al-Dujayli identified the head-cutters as dervishes, while Mahmud

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21 Tihrani, *Al-Dhari'a ila tasanif al-shi'a*, 1: 74–75. See also Mahbuba, *Madi al-Najaf*, 2: 264–65.

22 Great Britain, Administration Report of the Shamiyya Division, 1919, CO 696/2.

23 Sharqi, *Al-Najaf al-ashraf*, 220–23.

al-Durra spoke of them as reckless Fedayin, Iranians or Kurdish groups from the mountains of Pusht-i Kuh.[24]

Both Lyell and Dujayli provide close descriptions of the ritual of head-cutting, in Najaf and Karbala respectively. According to Lyell, during the first ten days of 'Ashura' the participants would adopt every conceivable device to work themselves up to a pitch of frenzy, tenderly nursing their swords and vying with each other in sharpening them. On the ninth of Muharram, yards of new white linen or cotton would be brought and made up into long foot-length robes. It was the custom in the shrine cities to approach government officials for money to purchase this material. Having procured their white garments, the Turkmen would pass the whole night in the coffee-shops consuming vast quantities of dates and tea, which raised their blood-pressure. The next morning, they would gather at 'Ali's shrine in anticipation of the ritual itself.[25] Dujayli described the head-cutters as the "lovers of Husayn", who sought to sacrifice themselves for him in order to gain a reward or a blessing from the imam. On the tenth of Muharram, the would-be martyrs dressed themselves in white cloths, which symbolized the shrouds of a corpse. Their heads shaved so that nothing could diminish the effect of the blades, they each took a sword and headed toward Husayn's shrine. Inside, a re-enactment of the battle would take place in front of a large audience. At the moment of climax, the flagellants would respond to a signal and start beating their heads with their swords. Then they would exit from the shrine and march in a procession through the streets of the city. The crowd would excite the flagellants, and some Arabs would shoot in the air. This would incite the flagellants further and accelerate the rhythm of their beating. Some would faint or and collapse as a result, others would die. This death was considered most rewarding by the flagellants and even by some of the city-dwellers. Some

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24   T. Lyell, *The Ins and Outs of Mesopotamia*, London, 1923, 67; K. al-Dujayli, "'Ashura' fi al-Najaf wa-Karbala'," *Lughat al-'Arab* 2 (1913), 287; Durra, *Hayat 'iraqi*, 24.

25   Lyell, *Ins and Outs*, 67–69.

women would seek out a piece of the martyr's soggy garment, considering it a relic that contained a sort of blessing.[26]

That harsh breast-beating and chain flagellation only came to Iraq in the nineteenth century may be gathered from several pieces of information. Shiites assert that Sheikh Baqir ibn Sheikh Asadallah al-Dizfuli (d. 1839/40) was the first to introduce breast-beating at the shrine of Kazimayn.[27] Najafi oral history relates that the practice of chain flagellation was introduced into the city in 1919 by the British governor of Najaf, who had previously served in Kermanshah and witnessed the practice there. It is also said that chain flagellation took place initially in the Mishraq quarter, and that the first such procession occurred in Najaf in 1919 to mourn the death of the grand mujtahid Kazim Yazdi.[28] If this is true, the British action was probably intended to modify the Muharram rituals and to reduce the degree of violence by replacing the practice of head-cutting with chain flagellation.

Although chain flagellation and breast-beating were more widespread than head-cutting in Iraq, they were not observed by all major segments of the Shiite Arab population. These acts were part of the public processions (known in Iraq as *al-mawakib al-husayniyya*, and *mawakib al-'aza'* or *al-subaya*) held during the first ten days of Muharram in the villages, towns and shrine cities. In the rural area around Daghara, Robert Fernea noted that men and boys participated in the mourning procession on the tenth of Muharram. Stripped to the waist, they marched in procession, chanting and beating themselves rhythmically with lengths of chain and leather whips. The tribesmen of the Shabana, however, did not participate in these processions. Whereas the sheikh of the tribe took pride in sponsoring the memorial services, he would not support flagellation since it was not deemed consistent with proper tribal activity and moral values.[29]

26 Dujayli, "'Ashura'," 286–95.
27 Tihrani, *A'lam al-shi'a*, 2: 170; Wardi, *Lamahat*, 2: 111.
28 Sharqi, *Al-Najaf al-ashraf*, 239–40.
29 R. Fernea, *Sheikh*, 71–72.

In Iraq, as both Sunnis and Shiites have stressed, men used the flagellation to exhibit their masculinity. In Bughayla, Durra recounted, a majority of the men would march in procession slapping their bare breasts with their hands. Following them was another group of villagers, their black *gallabiyyas* covering only the lower part of their bodies. Using iron chains, the men of this group would beat their bare backs in a rhythm set by their leader, accelerating as the crowd grew more excited and the cries of the women became louder. The flagellants would then look at the women standing on the rooftops and proudly display the rough marks left on their bodies. Similarly, the Iraqi Shiite sociologist 'Ali al-Wardi has described how men in a flagellation procession would feel lofty and proud in the knowledge that they were noticed by the crowd, and that the machismo would intensify when they sensed that they were being watched by women. The women's crying would drive a man to feel like a victorious conqueror leading a great army. The function of the flagellation in flaunting a man's masculinity, Wardi argued, was an important factor in preserving the vitality of the processions in Iraq in the twentieth century.[30]

The different ethnic identities of the Shiite population and their attitudes to the government surfaced during the public processions in Iraq. The processions celebrated in Kazimayn demonstrated the difference between Persians and Arabs. In the Ottoman period, the Persian participants paraded before the Iranian consul-general, thereby stressing their Persian identity and strong communal sense, whereas the Arabs used to perform before the custodian of the shrine, who was a government appointee. The fundamental difference in the attitude of the Persian and Arab participants to the legitimacy of the Iraqi monarchy surfaced as early as 1921. In that year King Faysal attended the processions of 10 Muharram in Kazimayn. It is reported that Sayyid Muhammad al-Sadr wished to alter the proceedings so that both the Arab and Persian teams would have to perform before the King. But, while the Arabs did this, the Persians refused to acknowledge the King's

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30 Durra, *Hayat 'iraqi*, 23; Wardi, *Lamahat*, 2: 111.

authority and insisted on performing only in front of the Iranian con-
sul-general's box.[31]

For the most part, however, the public processions served more to
confirm the existing social order than to deny it; they reflected the
various aspects of life and the structure of Shiite communities in differ-
ent localities in Iraq. The ritual was a kind of symbolic language that
communicated various coded messages. It articulated the relationship
between the different components of society, marked the religious status
of learned families and sayyids, and ranked tribal sheikhs, notables and
ordinary people according to their socio-economic position within the
community. The mourning processions in Najaf, for example, were also
known as the "processions of the crafts" *(mawakib al-asnaf)*. Members
of the various professions in the city, as well as the religious students,
shrine servants and sayyids, used to parade in groups, each formed ac-
cording to its unique class and professional affiliations. Leading reli-
gious, tribal and other elite families often sponsored the processions in
their community. In doing so, they sought not only to gain social esteem
but to preserve their status and authority within the community.[32]

The great procession in Karbala on the 20th of Safar (*ziyarat al-
arba'in*, marking the fortieth day after the battle of Karbala) acted as
the meeting point of the various Shiite classes and urban and rural
communities in Iraq. This occasion, which in the nineteenth century
attracted many new tribal converts to the city, was intended to increase
Shiite communal solidarity in Iraq. It also helped maintain the social-
economic contacts between Karbala and its hinterland as well as the
city's status as the focus of devotion for Shiite believers. The procession
of the 20th of Safar enabled various classes and communities to reassert
their status and relative importance within the general fabric of Iraqi
Shiite society. Participants in the local processions would practise in
advance for the great procession in Karbala. The expenses of each team
were usually assumed by a sponsor *(sahib al-'aza')*, who would buy such
special cloth and equipment as might be needed and contribute money

31 Intelligence Report no. 21, 15 September 1921, FO 371/6353.
32 Sharqi, *Al-Najaf al-ashraf*, 217.

to send the team to the great procession in Karbala. The cloth and
equipment were stored every year, being the property of the sponsoring
individual or family.[33] The number of teams sent from each location
varied. Usually, several villages would form one team to be represented
in Karbala, but an important city like Najaf would send several teams
that represented its various districts and classes. Each team was headed
by a leader, who carried the banner of his village, city or quarter. As
may be gathered from a description of the procession in Karbala in
1920, the occasion resembled a huge carnival:

> Parties from the principal towns both in the immediate neighbourhood and on
> the upper Tigris, went in procession through town, each vying with each other in
> representing the tragic occurrence which is the purpose of the festival to recall to
> memory […]. The concourse formed by the people of Najaf, which had been
> patiently awaited for some time, made its appearance at last […]. This party was
> so magnificent, that the spectators forgot those which had preceded it. It con-
> sisted, as usual, of a party of Arab horsemen, followed by a large number of
> camels, carrying household utensils and some characters representing the family
> of Husayn, who were taken prisoners and who are said to have arrived from
> Damascus on some such occasion […]. This was followed by a great party from
> among the following classes: first the sayyids, secondly the theologians and reli-
> gious luminaries, and thirdly the leading merchants and notables […]. Then
> arrived the chest beaters and the chain beaters, who formed some twenty parties
> of over a hundred persons each. [The Najafis] were the last of the various groups,
> and consisted of some six or seven thousand people.[34]

The great procession in Karbala fostered the identities of regional groups
and classes, and marked the relative importance of Shiite communities
and cities in Iraq. The sponsoring of a procession enabled individuals
and families to highlight their status outside their locality; their wealth
could be calculated by the amount of money they spent on the cloth
and equipment. The status of cities was reflected in the number of
participants and the classes represented. In the case of city districts, the

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33 R. Fernea, *Sheikh*, 71. See also T. ʿA. al-Sharqi, *ʿAyn al-tamr*, Najaf, 1969, 148.
34 Extract from: Administrative Report of Political Officer, Hilla, Regarding Karbala
     and Status of Mujtahids, 5 April 1920, FO 371/5074/5285.

head of the team, who was the *mukhtar* or his nominee, could use the occasion to affirm his position vis-à-vis rival district leaders. The residents of one quarter could equally use the occasion to affirm their superiority over residents of other quarters, thereby demonstrating their strong local identity.[35]

A look at the cult of the saints will further underline how Muharram observances reflected the strong Arab tribal attributes of Shiite society in Iraq.

The Cult of the Saints

Visits to the shrines of imams and the tombs of local saints played an important social-political role in Iraq. It was believed that, through the visit and the prayers and votive offerings by the tomb, supplicants could obtain the help and intercession of the saints with God on their behalf. The manner in which the imams and other saints were identified, as well as the attributes with which they were endowed, are further indications of the strong Arab tribal character of Shiite society in Iraq.

Visits to local shrines and tombs intensified in the nineteenth century as the bulk of Iraq's nomadic tribes settled down and took up agriculture – a transition which resulted in a major crisis of social-political organization, reinforced by the fragmentation of the confederations and the decline in the authority of the sheikhs. This created a pressing need for saintly services to ease the break-up of tribal order and to compensate for the decline in the moral and political authority of the sheikhs. Following their sedentarization, tribesmen developed new contacts with Najaf and Karbala, gradually restructuring their identity and coming to share the peasants' view of holy things. Neverthe-

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35 See Wardi's discussion of the rivalry between Najaf and Kazimayn as it surfaced in the great procession of Karbala in 1929: 'A. al-Wardi, *Dirasa fi tabi'at al-mujtama' al-'iraqi*, Baghdad, 1965, 190–91.

less, despite the changed pattern of settlement and religious status, there was still some continuity with the old social and cultural values of the tribesmen, and the Arab attributes of ideal manhood did not cease to be effective in their lives.

The emissaries who propagated Shiism among the tribes in Iraq portrayed the imams as possessing the Arab attributes of ideal manhood *(muruwwa)*. Attempting to appeal to tribesmen who appreciated such values as masculinity, courage, pride, honour and chivalry, the emissaries dramatized the heroic stand of Husayn during the battle of Karbala and laid special emphasis on 'Ali's courage, eloquence, honesty and simplicity of life. Using poetry as well, they portrayed 'Ali as a wonder man to whom one could turn in times of trouble:

> Call 'Ali the bearer of miracles
> [and] you will find him an aide for your wishes.[36]

The moral values of Iraq's Shiite tribes were built into their cult of the saints. The *"minimum de religion"* with which Shiite Islam influenced the sedentarized tribesmen was transformed in Iraq into a cult of saints, the starting point of which was the ideal manhood of the Arabs. For the Shiite Marsh Arabs, the imams, or the saints, were not so much intercessors with God as protectors of property and crops, and avengers of false oaths. These attributes counted for most among tribesmen in general in Iraq, and so visits to tombs of local saints were a practice shared by both Shiite and Sunni tribesmen.[37]

Some of the tribesmen's expectations of the imams may be gathered from the critical descriptions of shrine visits written by Iranians and Sunni ulama. Adib al-Mulk, who visited Iraq in 1856/7, told of how Arabs beseeched Imam Husayn to cure them of their illnesses. And

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36 "Al-bid'a wa al-khurafat wa al-taqalid wa al-'adat 'ind al-shi'a: risala min al-Bahrayn", *Al-Manar* 13 (1910), 308.

37 Ibid., 309; "Mas'alat al-qubur wa al-mashahid 'ind al-shi'a: munazara bayna 'alim shi'i wa-'alim sunni", *Al-Manar* 28 (1927), 443, 596; Wardi, *Dirasa*, 236–44; 'A. al-Nafisi, *Dawr al-shi'a fi tatawwur al-'Iraq al-siyasi al-hadith*, Beirut, 1973, 72–76.

Pirzadeh, journeying to Karbala around 1888, described the visits of Arab tribesmen during Muharram and criticized them for their view of Husayn as a wonder man able to fulfill their personal wishes in this world: for example, better crops, recovery from illness, the birth of sons or assistance against enemies. It is evident that, in Pirzadeh's view, the religious observances of tribesmen on the occasion of their visit were markedly less pure than those of other ethnic groups. He was especially critical of the custom whereby men and women used to enter the inner part of Husayn's shrine together, a custom which still existed early in the 1930s, when it was condemned by Sunni *'ulama'* and by the Shiite *mujtahid* Muhsin al-Amin during a visit to Iraq in 1933.[38] Access to the inner sanctum containing the tomb often carried the danger that the tomb itself, and the figure believed to be buried in the shrine, would become the focus of worship.

The loyalty of the settled tribesmen to imam 'Ali, as the Iraqi Shiite sociologist 'Ali al-Wardi has stressed, was based on their admiration of 'Ali's attributes of ideal manhood. The tribesmen did not believe in the emotional commemoration of 'Ali's death or that of Husayn, and saw in their death the object of every hero.[39] This may be gathered also from the following observation:

> The official [sic] teaching [of Shiite Islam] no longer makes any appeal to the masses. They live and thrive on the memory of their saints, whose moral qualities are rarely if ever remembered, but whose feats in the battlefield form an unfailing source of conversation. What use has the cultivator for Allah? None. That Allah may be the Merciful, the Wise, the Judge to the ninety-ninth power, is of absolutely no interest to him, and has no effect on his daily life. But the stature of 'Ali or Husayn, the way they fought, the blows they gave, the slaughter which they themselves carried out single-handed, the streams of blood which marked

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38 Adib al-Mulk, *Safarnama-yi Adib al-Mulk bi-'atabat (Dalil al-za'irin)*, 1273 h.q., Tehran, 1985, 207–208; Pirzadeh, *Safarnama*, 1: 352–53; "Mas'alat al-qubur wa al-mashahid 'ind al-shi'a", 443, 595–56; "Al-bid'a wa al-khurafat", 309; M. al-Amin, *Rihlat al-sayyid Muhsin al-Amin fi Lubnan wa al-'Iraq wa-Iran wa-Misr wa al-Hijaz*, 2nd ed., Beirut, 1985, 133.

39 Wardi, *Dirasa*, 239–40.

their passage through the hordes of the enemy, these are things that the people understand. Here are natural human personalities, exhibiting the perfection of the very qualities that they themselves possess: physical endurance and bravery in warfare […] a steadfastness and patience in suffering, which is characteristic of all the tribesmen.[40]

This type of veneration, which stressed the physical attributes of the imams, reflected the negligible influence of Sufism and mysticism among the Shiite rural and tribal population of Iraq. Sufism did not gain ground among Shiites in Iraq and was recognizable more among Sunnis or the numerically marginal Shiite extremist groups like the Shabbak of Turkish origin. Such Bektashi and Naqshbandi traces as could be found in the shrine cities early in the twentieth century were the result of Sunni Ottoman influences.[41] The limited influence of Sufism on Shiites in Iraq stands out when compared with Iranian society, where the presence of mysticism was very strong for at least half a millennium. Among the Iranian pilgrims Sufi influences played a more significant role, and thus their contact with the imams during the visitation was often of an essentially different character from that of the Arab tribesmen. The Iranians sought to lift the imams into a supernatural, divine sphere, and crossed the border between human and divine more easily than the tribesmen. Indeed, the Iranians advanced far along the road to deification of the imams, thereby demonstrating the strong mass appeal of the mystics in their society.[42]

Besides the shrines of the imams, there existed other holy sites and tombs of saints in various locations in Iraq, most notably those connected with family of the imams. It is related that dreams and visions

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40 Lyell, *Ins and Outs*, 183.

41 K. M. al-Shaybi, *Al-Tariqa al-safawiyya wa-rawasibuha fi al-'Iraq al-mu'asir*, Baghdad, 1967, 39–58; M. al-Khalisi, "Al-tawa'if al-islamiyya fi al-'Iraq", *Risalat al-Islam* 6 (1954), 53; 'A. al-'Azzawi, *Ta'rikh al-'Iraq bayna ihtilalayn*, 8 vols., Baghdad, 1935–1956, 4: 152–55; Administration Reports of the Baghdad Wilayat, 1917, CO 696/1.

42 R. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, New York, 1985, 144; I. Goldziher, "Veneration of Saints in Islam", in his *Muslim Studies*, ed. S. M. Stern, 2 vols., London, 1966, 2: 294. See also Amin, *Rihlat*, 231.

led to the appearance of some of the tombs in southern Iraq, a practice which probably intensified following the settlement of the tribes and their conversion to Shiism. Thus, in the mid-nineteenth century a tomb attributed to Sagban, presumably a son of the sixth imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, was located in Hindiyya. Tombs near Najaf were identified even as late as the first half of the twentieth century.[43] The following story sheds more light on the way in which tombs of Shiite saints were acknowledged and developed as places to visit. It is said that, toward the end of the 1880s, the *'alim* Mirza Husayn Nuri reaffirmed that Sayyid Muhammad was a son of the tenth imam. The tomb in question, which before that date had fallen into decay, was rebuilt and covered with copper. It was reported in 1917 that a family of about thirty looked after the tomb and gained their living from the charity of visitors.[44]

Five tombs of saints carried particular importance. In the order of their eminence these were the tombs of: 'Abbas, a son of imam 'Ali and Husayn's half-brother, in Karbala; Sayyid Muhammad, a son of the tenth imam, near Balad; 'Abdallah, also a son of 'Ali, south of Qal'at Salih; 'Ali al-Sharqi, a brother of the eighth imam, in Kumayyit; and 'Ali al-Yathribi, a son of the seventh imam, near Badra.[45] Believed to possess special attributes, these tombs were frequented by the local population, who used to make pledges and votive offerings there.

The tribesmen in Iraq venerated dead saints and believed that they possessed knowledge which they themselves lacked, especially the power to determine whether a person was lying. That saints came to function as a kind of a conscience for the settled tribesmen may be gathered from the latter's socio-economic activities. An oath in the name of a saint played a central role in daily interaction among Iraqi Shiite tribesmen and between them and city-dwellers; it gave force to both personal agreements and business transactions. The selection of the saint

43 'A. al-Wardi, *Al-Ahlam bayn al-'ilm wa al-'aqida*, Baghdad, 1959, xiii–xiv.

44 Administration Report of the Baghdad Wilayat, 1917, CO 696/1. See also Y. I. al-Samarra'i, *Ta'rikh madinat Samarra'*, 3 vols., Baghdad, 1968–1973, 3: 119–20.

45 Wardi, *Dirasa*, 241, 244–46.

in whose name the oath was taken depended on the nature and importance of the contract or transaction in question. An oath in the name of 'Abbas, whose figure became the focus of the tribesmen's admiration, carried more weight among them than one in the name of the Prophet or the imams.[46] Among the tribesmen 'Abbas became known as the "Quick to Anger" *(abu ra's al-harr)*, famed for the swiftness of his vengeance. The tribesmen believed that, since the Prophet and the imams were infallible, they would not harm a person who ventured to take a false oath in their name. But 'Abbas was not infallible. An oath in his name was the most binding of all oaths, one that the Marsh Arab feared to break lest some dire calamity speedily befall himself or his family. Indeed, the ceiling of the mosque of 'Abbas shows the embedded head of a man; it is believed to have flown off as a result of his swearing falsely in 'Abbas' name.[47]

The break-up of the tribal order helps to explain the eminent position of 'Abbas and the role he came to play among the settled tribesmen. Against the decline in the political and moral authority of the sheikh, the cult of 'Abbas demonstrated a search by the tribesmen for a new father figure who would articulate authority and leadership. In this perspective, a visit to his shrine was a visit to the place where power was supposed to reside. Patron-client relationships, which were an integral part of the life of the tribes, were built into the cult of the saints in Iraq. Thus, the image attached to certain saints reflected their function as patron, protector or mediator ever present in people's life. In the case of 'Abbas, this was reinforced by the invention of traditions that highlighted his physical capabilities and portrayed him as the ideal cavalier. The relationship of the tribesmen with the saint, however, transcended the abrasive qualities of normal patron-client relationships, for the saint was not a tribal sheikh or a usurper.

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46 Nafisi, *Dawr*, 74–75; Fulanain, *The Marsh Arab Haji Rikkan*, Philadelphia, 1928, 181. For occasions during which an oath in the name of 'Abbas was taken see W. Thesiger, *The Marsh Arabs*, London, 1964, 29, 56.

47 Wardi, *Dirasa*, 241–42; Fulanain, *The Marsh Arab*, 182, 184–85; Lady E.S. Drower, *By Tigris and Euphrates*, London, 1923, 40.

In encouraging visits to the shrines of imams, the *'ulama'* and *mujtahids* of Iraq were attempting to use religion to bring the settled tribesmen under a form of political organization. Their aim was to confirm the contact of the shrine cities with their hinterland, to stimulate religious devotion among the converted tribesmen, and to increase the sense of Shiite solidarity and unity as a group. For many tribesmen, visits to the shrines of imams were a substitute for the hajj to Mecca. The tribesmen were not strict in their religious observance. While they rarely observed prayers and the fast of Ramadan, they came to consider the visitation of the shrines of 'Ali, Husayn and 'Abbas as a sacred ritual. Tribesmen saved up money to visit these shrines, and the pilgrim was regarded as a pious man when he returned among his fellow tribesmen.[48] The experience of a Shiite Marsh Arab, who related in the early 1920s how his visit to Karbala subsequently affected both his social position and his own self-image, is worthy of citation:

> We returned […] My tribe made hosa [a clamorous reception], firing their rifles in the air. And in jest, because I had been to distant Karbala, one of my uncles called me Haji, which nickname clung to me although, long absent as I had been, never had I set foot in distant Mecca. Thus in later years, when I began to have dealings outside the marsh, it became clear to me that this title brought me respect and greater consideration wherever I might be; so with boldness I called myself Haji […] w'Allah [by God], even I myself at times am verily persuaded that I have indeed made the pilgrimage [to Mecca].[49]

The ritual of the visit and its collective celebration offered a joint experience vital for the maintenance of organized religion and the existing set of social networks. A visit to the tomb of the imam gave the tribesman a sense of acceptance; he was now a Shiite by devotion, even if a Bedouin by birth. The stress on visits at certain times of the year drew together people from several communities in an emotionally charged display of common purpose. Najaf and Karbala, in particular, used this

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48 S. Salim, *Marsh Dwellers of the Euphrates Delta*, London, 1962, 12–13; Thesiger, *The Marsh Arabs*, 44, 82; R. Fernea, *Sheikh and Effendi*, 21.

49 Fulanain, *The Marsh Arab*, 84–85.

to highlight their shrines as special destinations. Indeed, when the visits climbed to unusual highs, the two cities could maintain a pilgrimage cult on the basis of being caught up in mass celebration. This function of the visit to Najaf and Karbala resembled the three annual visits to the Temple in Jerusalem, on the occasions of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot, one of whose main aims was to strengthen the religious and social solidarity of the Jews of ancient Israel.[50]

At least one visit, celebrated at Najaf on the occasion of the Persian new year's day of Nawruz, was closely tied to the annual agricultural cycle. As such, it resembled the ancient Israelite pilgrim festival of Shavuot, which marked the end of the barley season and the beginning of the wheat harvest.[51] The Arab tribesmen did not celebrate Nawruz as a Persian holiday in the same way that their Persian coreligionists in Iraq did. For the tribesmen, Nawruz symbolized the first day of spring and the beginning of a new cycle of agricultural and herding activities. This occasion removed them from their ordinary occupations; they celebrated the day by conducting horse races and sporting new clothes, and also by visiting the shrines.[52]

The set of Muharram rituals, and the images that Iraqi Shiites have attached to the imams and other saints, together demonstrate the negligible influence of Sufism and mysticism among Arab Shiites in Iraq, in contrast to their strong mass appeal in Iran. Moreover, whereas the commemoration of 'Ashura' and the cult of the saints among Iranian Shiites have focused on elements of martyrdom and future reward, the stress in these practices in Iraq has been on the Arab ideal of manhood, that is, the worldly attributes of masculinity, honour and bravery, which have appealed to the Iraqi Shiites.

50   *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s. v. "Pilgrimage".
51   *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s. v. "Shavuot."
52   Sharqi, *Al-Najaf al-ashraf*, 77; 'A. al-Fadli, *Dalil al-Najaf al-ashraf*, Najaf, 1966, 37.

Sabrina Mervin

'Ashura': Some Remarks on Ritual Practices in Different Shiite Communities (Lebanon and Syria)

The Lebanese Shiites observe 'Ashura' rituals in Beirut and its southern suburbs, in southern Lebanon and in the Bekaa valley, while in Syria Shiite groups of various origins observe them at the shrine of Sayyida Zaynab, Imam Husayn's sister, in a little town to the south of Damascus that now bears the saint's name. Before analysing how the rituals are performed in these places today, we should give a brief historical overview of the practices in the region, in the following three stages: importation of Iraqi and Iranian practices, reform of the rituals, and processes of politicization.

The first stage was the importation of Iraqi and then Iranian rituals, more than a century ago. Oral history reports that, under Ottoman rule, it was forbidden for Shiites to observe their specific rituals in the open air in Bilad al-Sham, and so believers used to hold the lamentation sessions *(majalis al-ta'ziya)* at home, in secret. Children were posted as look-outs to warn of the arrival of Ottoman guards in the neighbourhood, and participants would then pretend to be reading the Koran. This is a *topos* we have heard, which is transmitted in several academic works about the history of 'Ashura' rituals in Jabal 'Amil.[1] But we can also find written data about the subject. John M.D. Wortabet, who observed such practices around 1860, noted:

> The Metawileh (namely the Shiites of Jabal 'Amil) spend the first ten days of the
> month of Moharram in mourning and lamentations, as the anniversary of the

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1   Jabal 'Amil is the ancient name of South Lebanon.

death of El Hosain. During those days they read a long and pathetic history of the occasion, and do not work in them. They call them 'The Ten Days'.[2]

Muhsin al-Amin, one of the most prominent 'Amili *mujtahid* of the twentieth century, gave more details in his autobiography. In the first days of Muharram, he explained, believers used to read a book entitled *al-Majalis*; then, on the tenth day, they read the *maqtal* written by Abu Mikhnaf[3] and recited the prayer of the *ziyara* at Husayn's shrine. Afterwards, they brought a special meal, called *harisa*, to the mosque, where they distributed it to the poor. In 1880, when al-Amin's master Musa Sharara came back after completing his religious studies in Iraq, he brought some changes to the 'Ashura' rituals in accordance with the Iraqi ways. He used another *majalis* book, and the *maqtal* written by Ibn Tawus as was customary in Iraq, and he introduced new weekly sessions and funeral rituals.[4] For Muhsin al-Amin, all these changes were positive. But there were other changes as well.

About 1895, the Ottoman authorities softened their policy toward the Shiites and their rituals: it was part of the pan-Islamic policy to be more tolerant to the Shiite minority. Yet they had given more freedom to the Iranian community of Istanbul, which was now able to observe the 'Ashura' rituals in public.[5] They allowed Iranians who had settled in

2   J. M. D. Wortabet, *Researches into the Religions of Syria*, London: James Nisbet, 1860, 272.

3   A *maqtal* is an account of the martyrdom of Husayn. See Sebastian Günther, "*Maqatil* Literature in Medieval Islam", *Journal of Arabic Literature* XXV (1994), 192–212.

4   M. al-Amin, *Autobiographie d'un clerc chiite du Jabal 'Amil,* translation and notes (in French) S. Mervin and H. al-Amin, Damascus: IFEAD, 1998, 72–75. The original text in Arabic was published in *A'yan al-Shia*, and has been recently reprinted, see *Sirat al-sayyid Muhsin al-Amin, Tahqiq wa sharh Haitham al-Amin wa Sabrina Mirfan*, Beirut: Riad el-Rayyes Books, 2000.

5   Th. Zarcone, "La situation du chi'isme à Istanbul au XIXᵉ siècle et au début du XXᵉ siècle", in Th. Zarcone and F. Zarinebaf-Shahr (eds), *Les Iraniens d'Istanbul*, Istanbul-Tehran: IFÉA/IFRI,1993, 103–105; "Un regard sur les lieux de culte chi'ites à Istanbul (fin d'Empire ottoman-époque contemporaine)", *Lettre d'Information de l'Observatoire Urbain d'Istanbul* 2 (1992), 10–11.

Damascus and Jabal 'Amil towards the end of the century to observe their ritual practices: namely, an ancient theatrical form of Karbala tragedy (*shabih* in Arabic, *ta'zieh* in Persian) and certain public processions *(mawakib husayniyya)*. During the latter, they practised the *tatbir* mortification ritual, which consists of making an incision in the crown of the head and, as they walk along, beating it with their hands or the flat part of a sword to make the blood flow. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Iranian rituals developed and spread with the encouragement of 'Abd al-Husayn Sadiq, the cleric of Nabatiyyeh.[6] All these practices were conducted in marketplaces, in Jabal 'Amil and especially Nabatiyyeh, and around the shrine of Sayyida Zaynab, in a village near Damascus which in those days was called Rawiya or "Qabr al-Sitt".

The second stage in the development of the 'Ashura' rituals was the reform that Muhsin al-Amin, the 'Amili *mujtahid* living in the old Shiite area of Damascus, implemented in the 1920s. On the one hand, he reorganized and rationalized the lamentation sessions as a "school" *(madrasa)* for believers, and for that purpose wrote several books including a *maqtal* and a *majalis* book, *al-Majalis al-saniyya*. On the other hand, he prohibited two kinds of practices: the representation of the Karbala tragedy, and the flagellation and other mortification practices that he considered to be innovations *(bid'a)*. This attempt at reform triggered violent debates within religious circles, in Lebanon and at Najaf, where many *mujtahid* were against it; they published treatises in response to Muhsin al-Amin and other reformists, while some prominent *mujtahid* issued *fatwas* on the issue. Muhsin al-Amin insisted in his testament that some practices should be declared *muharram* (forbidden), and in 1928 he published a booklet reiterating his positions, *Risalat al-tanzih* which provoked further reactions including press articles, quarrels among clerics and even fistfights among their supporters.[7] Al-Amin's aim was to rationalize religious practices and make them

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6   For more details, see S. Mervin, *Un réformisme chiite: Ulémas et lettrés du Jabal 'Amil (actuel Liban-Sud) de la fin de l'Empire ottoman à l'indépendance du Liban*, Paris: Karthala-CERMOC-IFEAD, 2000, 246–247.

7   Ibid., 250–274.

more moral, thereby imparting a more positive image of the Shiites. His detractors wished to defend the special rituals through which believers expressed their devotion to the imam and their Shiite identity.

In Lebanon, the reform had little impact on the majority of believers because, although Muhsin al-Amin had a few supporters among the scholars and clerics, others opposed the reform and authorized all the rituals of 'Ashura'. In Damascus, on the other hand, he was able to impose the reform because there was no rival in a position to challenge his religious authority. Therefore the representation of the Karbala tragedy and the mortification rituals around the shrine of Sayyida Zaynab ceased, and the Syrian Shiites of Damascus performed Muhsin al-Amin's reformed rituals in the old Shiite area of the city.

The third stage was the spread of the rituals and their politicization. Until the 1970s, in southern Lebanon, they were used to perpetuate the domination of local political leaders allied to the religious clerics. In 1948, after the loss of Palestine, some members of the Ba'th Party had tried to recast the rituals to give them a political meaning: Yazid was Israel, and Husayn, Palestine. But the clerics had ignored the Ba'th militants, and the believers had not followed them.

As Shiite refugees from southern Lebanon began to settle in the suburbs of Beirut and to perform the rituals publicly, in the streets,[8] the influence of the traditional political leaders began to wane. Musa al-Sadr emerged on the political scene and succeeded where the lay parties had failed. He was the first religious cleric to become involved closely with the so-called Shiite masses, and to fight for their political and social rights. In a famous speech he gave in Baalbek in 1974, he said:

> Do not allow ceremonies or lamentation to serve as a substitute for action. We must transform the ceremonies into a spring from which revolutionary fury and

8   M. Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied : Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'a Community,* Westview Press, 1992, 172–173; Y. Gonzalez-Quijano, "Les interprétations d'un rite: célébrations de la 'Achoura au Liban", *Maghreb-Machek* 15 (1987), 5–12. See also W. Chrara, *Transformation d'une manifestation religieuse dans un village du Liban-sud (Ashura)*, Beirut: Publications du Centre de Recherches de l'Université Libanaise, 1968.

> constructive protest will gush forth […] Now let me ask you: If Husayn were
> living with us and saw that the rights of the people and justice were being tram-
> pled under the foot of pride, what would he do?

Inspired by 'Ali Shariati, Musa al-Sadr made use of the Muharram ritu-
als to express a revolutionary spirit and a political and social protest.[9]

After the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon, the rituals became a
means of defying the occupation army and exalting the Islamic resist-
ance. Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, the spiritual leader of Hizbullah,
declared that the true followers of Husayn were the resistance fighters,
not the 'Ashura' flagellants. On the other hand, the rituals, and espe-
cially the public processions, gave the two Shiite movements, Hizbullah
and Amal, an opportunity to stage their rivalry and hostility to each
other.[10]

Some important changes occurred also in Damascus. In the 1950s
the old shrine of Sayyida Zaynab was rebuilt in Iranian style, thanks to
private donations, and in the 1970s Iraqi Shiites started to settle in the
small town of Sayyida Zaynab. Several waves of newcomers arrived there
later, in the 1980s and after the Shiite uprising of 1991 in Iraq, so that
today Iraqis form an important community in the town alongside
Afghanis, Pakistanis, Gulf Arabs, Iranians and other Shiite groups. They
founded several *hawzas* (religious schools) and *husayniyyas* (places of
worship where sessions are held). The Shiite groups from different coun-
tries have created networks there, and these are interwoven with other
networks based on neighbourhood solidarity, party membership or re-
ligious obedience to the same *marja'*.

In addition, the number of visitors to Sayyida Zaynab increased,
partly thanks to pilgrimages organized by the Iranian Islamic Republic
to all the Syrian Shiite places of worship. A Syrian consortium even
built a tourist complex to accommodate the pilgrims. Hence, the small
city became an economic and tourist centre in Syria as well as an ex-

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 9 See S. Nasr, "Mobilisation communautaire et symbolique religieuse: l'imam Sadr
    et les Chi'ites du Liban (1970–1975)", in O. Carré and P. Dumont (eds)
    Radicalismes islamiques, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985, 119–158.
10 Y. Gonzalez-Quijano, ibid., 19–28.

panding Shiite centre, with places of worship, institutions of learning, bookshops, representation offices for several *marja'*, and a substantial amount of political and religious agitation.[11]

As far as the rituals of 'Ashura' are concerned, two phenomena may be observed in Sayyida Zaynab today.[12] The first is a resurgence of certain practices that disappeared with Muhsin al-Amin's reform: for instance, the use of musical instruments during public processions (trumpets, drums), the presence of flares *(mash'al)* or the parading of carnival floats (most notably for the celebration of Qasim's wedding). These elements are clearly of Iraqi origin. In addition to chest-beating *(latm)*, believers perform some mortification practices, with the use of chains for flagellation and *tatbir*, on the tenth day of Muharram, the day of 'Ashura'. On the same day, a scene of the Karbala tragedy is performed in a soccer field in Sayyida Zaynab; it re-enacts the capture of Husayn's family by the Umayyad army and the burning of Husayn's camp. There is also a procession from the Umayyad mosque in Damascus – where Husayn's head is said to be kept – to Sayyida Zaynab, during which some people walk barefoot for three hours.

The second noteworthy phenomenon is that the Syrian authorities have yearly become more and more indulgent toward the Shiite community. For example, every evening during the celebrations, processions are held in the main street of Sayyida Zaynab which lend greater visibility than before to the rituals. A large number of non-Shiite onlookers are attracted from Damascus to watch the "show", forming a crowd in the streets and bringing car traffic to a halt for the duration. The Syrian authorities have also allowed the previously forbidden *tatbir* procession to take place on this street, on the tenth day, though still only at dawn, with no outsiders present, whereas in Lebanon it happens in broad daylight and with a large audience. In any event, the trend in Syria is for the rituals to become more visible,

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11 See S. Mervin, "Sayyida Zaynab: banlieue de Damas ou nouvelle ville sainte chiite?", *CEMOTI* 22 (1996), 149–162.

12 The following information is based on fieldwork I did over several years, from 1993 to 2002.

and to attract more and more non-Shiite onlookers; they have become real street shows, with lights, horses, colourful banners and flags, singing and the distribution of refreshments and pastries. Moreover, with technological assistance from audio and video tapes and CD-Roms, the rituals are invading the whole urban space: not only private houses but public space as well, where loudspeakers in shops relay the blare throughout the streets. Distances are abolished as people can watch sessions taking place in other parts of the Shiite world and listen to their favorite reciters (men such as Ahmad al-Wa'ili, 'Abd al-Hamid al-Muhajir or Basim al-Karbala'i).

There are influences from Iraq and other countries. Pilgrims from all over the Shiite world form groups and settle inside the shrine, often staying there day and night for the whole of the celebrations. Others come from Shiite villages in Syria, located mainly around Homs, and they too join the foreigners inside the shrine, grouped under their own special banner.

Then there are the inhabitants of the old Shiite neighbourhood in Damascus – now called Hayy al-Amin – who go to Sayyida Zaynab individually, without presenting themselves as an identifiable group. They have their own lamentation sessions, in the *husayniyya* of the area or in the schools founded by Muhsin al-Amin, where they continue to practise the reform rituals recommended by the *mujtahid* (who died in 1952): no public procession or performance, only sessions where you can see a few tears and some gentle beating of the chest *(latm)*, nothing more. They are intent on transmitting their moral values more through intellectual events such as conferences and lectures than through public displays of emotion. They do not seek to parade their religious particularity, nor to stand out as a confessional community of its own. They blend into the group of the Syrian Muslims, and remain very discreet about their religious rituals.

In the old city of Damascus, not far from the Umayyad mosque, there is another place, the shrine of Sayyida Ruqayya, which the Shiites particularly revere. In the early 1970s, a committee of clerics and religious personalities was formed to renew and extend the shrine; they bought shops and houses in the area, tore them down, and in 1984

began the construction of a new shrine, which was completed in 1991.[13] Today, this magnificent Iranian-style shrine has special ties with the Iranian embassy, whose cultural centre organizes lamentation sessions there during the Muharram celebrations. These sessions are in Persian and are attended by Iranians, many of them women who have come specially from Tehran by bus for an organized pilgrimage around Syria. For them, the Muharram celebrations are the highlight of the tour.

One illustration of group diversity in relation to the 'Ashura' rituals are the many differences between the lamentation sessions of the Syrian and the Iraqi women. In the old Shiite area of Damascus, the Syrians listen quietly to the reciter and sometimes weep in silence. There are more tears and lamentations among the Iraqis who attend sessions in Sayyida Zaynab, either in the private house of a notable or in a *husayniyya*. These women, who have suffered from repression in Iraq and now live in exile, are able to express their sorrow here. Moreover, at the end of the session, some of them stand up, take off their veil and dance in a circle, moving their head back and forth and beating their forehead in a rhythmic fashion. It seems that this ritual comes from Bedouin dances in the south of Iraq. As to the Lebanese women, their behaviour during lamentation sessions might be described as a cross between the reserve of the Syrians and the expansiveness of the Iraqis.

In Lebanon the celebrations take place where there is a Shiite population: in the villages and towns of the South, notably Nabatiyyeh and Tyre, in the Bekaa valley, in the southern suburbs of Beirut, and now even in Beirut proper. Local committees, religious schools and the two political formations, Amal and Hizbullah, organize lamentation sessions and public processions on each of the days. During 'Ashura' in March 2002 for instance, seventy people were wounded in a fight that broke out in Nabatiyyeh between Amal and Hizbullah, because they could not decide who would walk at the front of the procession.[14] This

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13 'Amir al-Ulw, *Al-sayyida Ruqayya, Qissatuha, maqamuha,* Vienna: Manshurat Markaz Ahl al-Bayt, 1994, 75–76.

14 "Au moins 70 blessés dans des affrontements Amal-Hezbollah à Nabatiyé"*, L'Orient-Le Jour*, 26/3/2002; "Hawadith al-Nabatiyya aqsat al-haraka wa al-hizb fa-ista'adat al-madina taqalid 'Ashura'", *Al-Nahar*, 28/3/2002.

public demonstration is therefore still a means of expressing local rivalries.

On the tenth day, the tragedy of Karbala is performed in Nabatiyyeh, on a large stage that is set up on the ancient threshing floor *(baydar)*, in front of the *husayniyya*. The performance takes the whole morning, if one includes the initial preparations of the actors and the arrival of the audience looking for places to sit or stand. It is nearly the same play each year, with many actors, horses and camels. It is based on a text written in 1936 with the help of a group of young people by 'Abd al-Husayn Sadiq (d. 1942), the Sheikh of Nabatiyyeh who was against Muhsin al-Amin's reform;[15] they re-invented and elaborated it relying on accounts by Shiite historians. The play is influenced much more by the Iraqi version than by the well-known Iranian *ta'ziyeh*: there are no songs, no parts for women and no supernatural manifestations; it is not performed in a *tekiyeh*; and it tells the whole tragedy of Husayn at once, in Arabic.[16] A local committee is in charge of the organization. The play attracts many people from outside Nabatiyyeh, even from Beirut and further. In the nearby village of Jibshit, a local committee put together a play of its own, which is staged for two hours and is starting to be successful.

The tragedy is not the only show that attracts such a large audience and causes traffic jams around Nabatiyyeh. Just after the play, on the same tenth day commemorating Husayn's martyrdom, there is another large procession at which some people practise the mortification ritual, the *tatbir*. As in Sayyida Zaynab, there are more and more of these

15 S. Mervin, *Un réformisme chiite,* 247–248. For more details about the history of the performances in Lebanon, see F. Maatouk, *La représentation de la mort de l'imam Hussein à Nabatié (Liban Sud)*, Beirut: Publications du Centre de recherches de l'institut des sciences sociales, Université libanaise, 1974; F. Ma'tuq, "'Ashura' (lubnaniyya) wa nass 1936", *Abwab* 6 (1995), 148–108; H. Kahyl, "Le théatre du 'Ashura à Nabatiyye", *Colloque "Ashura", Cahiers de l'Ecole Supérieure des Lettres* 5 (1974), Beirut; and the excellent unpublished work of S. Najah, *La célébration de la 'Ashura à Nabatiyye, Liban,* Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, Ph. D. dissertation, 1974, 2 vols.
16 S. Najah, 259–260.

bloody and spectacular practices. Yet some Shiite clerics forbid the *tatbir*, because they consider it self-damage *(darar)* and *haram* in Islam. Hizbullah does not allow its members to practise the *tatbir*, because Khomeini, and later Khamenei, forbade it. The party organizes a blood drive instead, during which it appeals on its TV and radio stations for its followers to donate their blood. Some prominent clerics in Lebanon, such as Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din (d. 2000), Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah and other modernists, have regularly declared that they are against the *tatbir*, but other clerics, generally more traditionalist, allow believers to indulge in it. The debate is still open, in the *fatwa* literature and in the press. In March 2002, a journalist asked several Lebanese clerics about their attitude to the 'Ashura' rituals, especially the *tatbir*: half of them forbade it and half allowed it.[17]

The same issue divides clerical circles in Sayyida Zaynab, where it is recognized as a "sensitive subject". Some even practise the *tatbir* themselves, among the believers, whereas others are definitely against any such rituals. Muhammad Shirazi, an Iraqi *marja'* who lived in Qom, has many followers in Sayyida Zaynab who practise the *tatbir*[18]. Now that Muhammad is dead, his brother Sadiq has issued a *fatwa* permitting it; it was distributed in the streets in March 2002, before the day of 'Ashura'. This led to a dispute, as some clerics opposed to the *tatbir* said that the *fatwa* was invalid because Sadiq Shirazi could not declare himself a *marja'* simply because his brother had been one.

Since 2000, some young Iraqi intellectuals teaching at Hawzat al-Murtada, a religious school supervised by Fadlallah in Sayyida Zaynab,

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17   Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, Muhammad Hasan al-Amin, Hani Fahs, 'Abd al-Amir Qabalan and Na'im Qasim forbade it; Abd al-Husayn Sadiq, Murtada 'Ayyad, 'Abd al-Husayn 'Abd Allah, Ja'far Murtada, Muhammad 'Usayran and Muhammad Kawtharani allowed it. S. Fadil, "Al-Tuqus al-'unfiyya 'ala masrah 'Ashura'", *Al-Nahar*, 21/3/2002.

18   See the position of Muhammad Shirazi concerning these rituals, in Markaz al-imam al-Shirazi li-l-buhuth wa al-dirasat, *Thaqafat 'Ashura' fi fikr al-imam al-Shirazi, Al-ta'ati wa al-adwar*, Beirut, 2002. His brother Hasan, who founded the first *hawza,* al-Zaynabiyya, in Sayyida Zaynab and was killed by the Iraqis in Beirut in 1980, stood up for the same opinion. See H. al-Shirazi, *Al-Sha'a'ir al-husayniyya,* Beirut: Mu'assasat al-imama, 2000.

have launched a blood drive for 'Ashura'. Some clerics support this initiative, which is organized in collaboration with the Syrian government and some Palestinians responsible for sending the blood to Palestine. In this way, they associate the remembrance of Husayn's death with an action in sollidarity with people who, like the imam, "march on the line of martyrdom".[19] Other blood drives of this kind are organized in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Nevertheless, Sayyida Zaynab is a place where Shiite communities are able to practise these mortification rituals freely. Iranians cannot practise them in their own country, and in Iraq all the Muharram rituals have gradually been forbidden for over fifteen years. So here, many believers have the opportunity to express both their religiosity and their frustration through these public demonstrations of symbolic violence. The Syrian state allows these Shiite foreigners to demonstrate their religious particularities. We should remember that they are often in opposition to the regime at home and have suffered from repression and exile (like the Iraqis, the Afghanis or certain people from the Gulf). Sayyida Zaynab has thus become a Shiite melting pot, where it is possible for outsiders to watch the rituals. The same is true in Lebanon, where the Lebanese Shiite community uses them also to occupy more space within the Lebanese political arena.

Each community has developed its own performance of the 'Ashura' rituals. Ways of moving, ways of forming a group around one or several leaders during the processions, ways of beating their chest: all these are different. The manner in which men display their virility through the rituals, as well as the ways in which women are expected to respond to this display, also differ from one community to the next. During the sessions, each community dwells on certain heroes of the Karbala battle, stressing particularly certain themes and using its own corpus of texts in its dialect or language. All this reflects cultural differences and disparities among various societies, as well as the construction of an identity through ritual practices.

19 Leaflet distributed by al-Markaz al-husayni li-tabarru' al-damm, Sayyida Zaynab, 24/03/02.

Michel Boivin

Representations and Symbols in Muharram and Other Rituals: Fragments of Shiite Worlds from Bombay to Karachi

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate a threefold diversity of South Asian Shiite worlds, in an area stretching from Bombay in India to Karachi in Pakistan. This area, the heartland of the Bombay Presidency during the period of British colonial rule, may be seen as belonging to a single *oikumene* – which implies that common features are more significant than apparent differences in the use and functionality attributed to Shiite rituals and symbols. Various sources will be used in support of the argument: archives, gazetteers and other such essential materials from British India, as well as local publications and manuscripts, and personal interviews and observations.

The paper will be divided into three sections corresponding to the threefold focus on the diverse Shiite worlds of South Asia. The first will study the evolution and significance of Muharram celebrations in the urban contexts of Bombay and Karachi, showing how these may have been both a subversive force against British rule in India and an integrative force enabling outsider communities to merge into the urban population. The second section will consider the shifting use of Shiite referents among the Khoja community. It is difficult to assess the extent to which the emergence of the Aga Khan, Hasan Ali Shah, explains the use of these referents in the rituals and in the appearance of Shiite data in the literature. Moreover, his son and successor, 'Ali Shah, known as Aga Khan II, introduced among the Sindhi Khojas a new

cult of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, who, as is well known, was the son of the first imam 'Ali, but not of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter. The third section will revisit a classical theme of Islamic studies: the relationship between Shiism and Sufism. It will do this by examining the representations and symbols used in certain shrines of Gujarat and Sindh, with special reference to the cult of the Sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar from Sehwan Sharif.

Figures of Muharram in the Urban Environment

The plural function of Muharram in colonial Bombay

In South Asia, Shiite identity is bound up with commemorations of the fateful events that took place on the battlefield of Karbala during the first ten days of Muharram in 680. Evidence of Muslim customs in India may be found in the book written by Ja'far Sharif in 1832. In fact, in the nineteenth century Muharram was celebrated by all Muslims, Shiites and Sunnis, as well as Hindus, and it was distinguished by a carnivalesque aspect. Muharram in colonial Bombay appears to have shifted from the religious to the political field. Thanks to the British archives, it is possible to distinguish four phases in the period.[1] The first, lasting until 1830, was one in which Muharram celebrations were organized by the (Sunni) Konkanis. The second, from 1830 to 1875, saw the advent of Shiites of Iranian origin, known as Moguls. The third phase, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was characterized by a clash between carnivalesque and funerary aspects. And finally, in the early twentieth century, the British authorities first restricted and then prohibited the Muharram.

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1   J. Masselos, "Change and Custom in the Format of the Bombay Mohurrum during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", *South Asia* 5/2 (1982), 47–67.

In the early nineteenth century, the Muslim community in Bombay was dominated by the Konkanis, essentially sailors and dockworkers who had come there in the seventeenth century from the coastal region between Goa and Daman. The Muharram processions were organized by district, and men took part in them lamenting but also dancing and singing. Only one object was put on display: the miniature tombs *(tabut or taziah)* of the imams Hasan and Husayn, grandsons of the Prophet Muhammad, who were closely associated with each other (though Hasan was not assassinated at Karbala). For the tenth of Muharram ('Ashura'), the last day, an impressive procession wound its way through the Muslim districts of Bombay, ending with the immersion of the *tabut*s in the ocean. Hindus used to build their own *tabut*s and joined in this final procession.

In the latter half of the 1820s, the Moguls introduced a number of new elements. They built the first places where mourning assemblies *(imambara)* were held for the Imam Husayn, but their main innovation was the use of horses, called *zul jannas*.[2] The marching Moguls used to beat their chests and to curse the Sunnis for the murder of Husayn, so that as early as 1826 rioting soon ensued when the two processions ran into each other. In 1835 the Konkanis asked the British to prohibit the Mogul procession, and we should note the strangeness of the situation whereby Sunnis sought a ban on the Shiite procession on the grounds that they were guardians of the authentic Muharram tradition. In accusing the Moguls of adding an innovation – the horse – the Konkanis implied that the Shiite procession was unorthodox.

The situation became more complicated because of a dispute between two Mogul families. The real issue was control of the Shiite community of Bombay, but in the process a second *imambara* was built and each family decided to organize its own procession of the horses. Once more rioting broke out, only this time between different Shiite factions. The British tried in vain to impose rules for Muharram, but in the end they were compelled to prohibit the horse parade in 1836 on the grounds that it was "odious" to a large number of Muslims.[3] The

2   Masselos, op. cit., 50.
3   Masselos, op. cit., 51.

ban had been called for in an official petition signed by the *qazi* of Bombay, and by the most prosperous merchants.

After the imposition of this ban, the *tabut* again became the heart of the ceremonies. It should be noted that the Konkanis allowed any new Muslim community, including some Shiites, to join their *tabut* procession. Yet hostility towards the Moguls was still intense and an *imambara* was attacked in 1846. During these years an important new Shiite settled in Bombay: Hasan Ali Shah, better known as Aga Khan I. The Aga Khan was the living imam of the Ismailis, and in India his followers were mainly known as Khojas. At first the Aga Khan joined one of the Mogul parties, but then he began to organize plays in his own residence without involving himself in the *tabut* processions.

With the eviction of the Moguls, Muharram came to be dominated by the carnivalesque form of procession. Indeed, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the processions were the most important show to take place in Bombay. The *Times of India*, dated 1 November 1884, spoke of "a carnival […] from those which, by their extent and their eccentricity, exist only in a few metropolis in the world".[4] It is believed that between 150 and 200 *tabut*s were then shown off. The British feared that Muharram would become an opportunity to foment rebellion against their rule, especially after the Great Mutiny of 1857, but in 1858 Queen Victoria proclaimed that the Raj would not interfere in the religious domain. Consequently, although it was impossible for the British to forbid Muharram, they tried to gain control of it by arguing that they were concerned to forestall rioting between the different communities.

In the late nineteenth century, the importance of Muharram was such that it permitted a new distribution of roles among the Muslims of Bombay. Patronage of the *tabut* procession was seen as a means of controlling a district, to the detriment of traditional authorities; the rivalries were more territorial than sectarian, although it is true that the districts were largely built on a communal basis. At the same time, groups of boys known as *toliwala*s appeared: at the end of the nine-

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4   Quoted in Masselos, op. cit., 54.

teenth century they numbered some two thousand individuals from the lumpenproletariat and the working classes of Bombay, with origins in the Hindu and Muslim lower castes settled in the outskirts. For them, the Muharram procession was an opportunity to play a social role recognized by all. The carnival allowed them to acquire a kind of power, if only for a while, over the upper classes of Bombay society. The exhibitionist behaviour of this proletariat in the trading districts of Bombay, which had prosperous settled communities, eventually led to fresh outbreaks of rioting in the city, and in 1904 and 1908 Sunni *toliwala*s attacked Bohra shopkeepers.[5]

Gradually the British had to impose stricter rules. In 1910 immersion of the *tabut*s was forbidden, and in 1913 the processions were totally prohibited. But the ban applied only to the city centre, and in the years until Independence many people living in central Bombay would go to the suburbs or neighbouring cities to attend the shows. In 1947 the municipality absorbed the outlying areas, so that the processions definitively disappeared from Bombay.

Eventually the Muharram celebrations were normalized and came under the control of the Moguls. Today, Muharram is celebrated only by the Shiites, who number several hundreds of thousands. All the ceremonies are organized by associations *(anjumans)* under the authority of an *'alim*. All exhibitionist practices are banned, and the main focus is the sufferings of Husayn and his family. Nothing other than the banners (*alam*s) is displayed in the procession, which winds its way from the *imambara* to the Shiite cemetery. There are many *tabut*s, but they are installed in the street where people stop to pray before them. The more devout may use the *zandjir zan* (chains with little knives at the end) for the flagellation that is supposed to cleanse them of their sins.

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5   The Bohras are an Ismaili community. They do not recognize a living imam, like the Aga Khan for the Khojas, but follow a high priest *(dai al-mutlaq)* who settles in Bombay. The Bohras are mostly Gujarati and are involved in different kinds of trade.

The Shiite communities in present-day Karachi and the role of Muharram

Karachi – one thousand kilometres north-west of Bombay – developed in the mid-nineteenth century after the British took it under their control (1839). Before the British conquest, Sindh had been ruled by the Talpurs, themselves Shiites, who had been told to spend lavishly on Shiite celebrations for Muharram.

Although Karachi attracted various peoples from neighbouring Baluchistan, Panjab, Gujarat and Rajasthan, its spectacular growth only really began after the partition in 1947. The Shiites living there do not form a single homogeneous community but tend to reflect the diversity of the city's population: the most numerous group, the Muhajirs,[6] are also the most numerous among the Shiites, but there are many other groups such as the Sindhis, the Panjabis, Baluchis, Pathans, Hazaras, Afghans, Baltis and Khojas.

The Shiite community is organized according to geographical origin (a common village or place) or membership in a sect or caste. These distinctions are obvious in the places they frequent, and the economic gap is expressed in the objects displayed for Muharram. Consequently, Shiite identity does not supersede social and economic stratification.

Many rituals are performed during the first nine days of Muharram, but the one on the tenth, 'Ashura', is by far the most important. It is the day of the procession to the sea from the mausoleum of Pakistan's first leader, Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah, a Shiite Khoja. It follows the main road of the city, formerly Bandar (Harbour) Road and today Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah Road, which passes through the populous districts of Saddar in the heart of the city before reaching the point where the *tabut*s are cast into the sea, to be retrieved for use the following year.

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6   The word Muhajir was first used for the Muslim populations who left India to settle in Pakistan after 1947. Since most of them were Urdu-speaking, the word Muhajir was finally restricted to this population. In 1984 Altaf Husayn created the Muhajir Qaumi Movement (Party of the Muhajir Nationality) which presently rules Karachi. See M. Boivin, "Le Pakistan et les Mohajir: une nation en quête de son identité", in J. L. Racine (ed.), *La question identitaire en Asie du sud*, Paris: EHESS, 2001, 245–270.

The 'Ashura' procession may be characterized in terms of objects and gestures. In Karachi four main objects are on display: the *'alam*s, the *tabut*s, the *tazia*s[7] and the *zul janna*s; another one often in evidence is the *jhula* or cradle. The most widespread item is the *'alam* – in fact, every Shiite community owns such things, which may proclaim its specific identity through special inscriptions *(mottos)*. One of the most common mottos is: *Ya Hazrat 'Abbas 'alamdar*. In another respect, the size and decoration of each *'alam* is a metaphor for the origin and wealth of the community. Gestures, on the other hand, serve the function not of revealing the community to spectators but of manifesting the place of individuals in their own community and Karachi society as a whole. Although various gestures are performed during the procession, we should make special mention of the most significant of these: flagellation with the *zandjir zan*.

Those who engage in this kind of flagellation (the *zandjir zani*s) exhibit a similar profile across the ethnically, economically and socially differentiated Shiite communities. Although mostly between the ages of 15 and 30, they are far more numerous in the poorest groups. For such people, the Muharram flagellation is a unique moment, the only time in the year when others will look at them in an admiring, not a negative, manner. Usually the *zandjir zani*s of the Balti community, for instance, are younger and more numerous than in the others. They are very well organized and disciplined, and this performance is almost the only show they can offer to an audience. It is true that they have very few objects to show off.

It is tempting to see in the *zandjir zan* a kind of initiation into adult society, perhaps a way of gaining the merit to acquire a wife and family. Those who perform it are not able to achieve recognition in their group by less violent means. As they re-enact the sufferings of their hero Husayn, it gives them a kind of supernatural power that legitimates their own existence in their group and in Karachi society. The wounds caused by the *zandjir zan*s will leave deep scars until the following year, and some-

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7   The *tazia* is here a miniature mausoleum of Husayn, while the *tabut* is his miniature tomb.

times a surgeon will even be required to sew them up. Forty days after 'Ashura', exactly the same ceremonies are performed by the Shiites, in a celebration known as Chihillum ('fortieth').

Shiite Identity as an Issue in the Khoja Community

The first Aga Khan and Shiite referents among the Khojas

Although the Khojas were theoretically followers of the Ismaili imams, they gave allegiance in South Asia to local *pir*s and *sayyid*s who were supposed to be the deputies – or even the kinsmen – of the imams settled in Iran. In 1843, for political reasons, the 46th Ismaili imam Hasan 'Ali Shah, better known as Aga Khan I, left Iran and travelled via Afghanistan to settle in Sindh.

The religious literature of the Khojas, known as *ginan*s, shows that the imam was then a kind of divine figure in their mythology. In their daily lives, the Khojas referred to the Ismaili *sayyid*s. Moreover, owing to the existence of many Ismaili *darga*s, it is evident that prior to the arrival of Hasan Ali Shah the Khojas also worshipped the *pir*s. It was the main religious practice in nineteenth-century Sindh.

We have seen that in 1843 Hasan 'Ali Shah established his headquarters in Sindh, in the town of Jherruk. In the Jherruk division, the Khojas represented approximately ten per cent of a total population of 100,000.[8] The town itself, with 1300 inhabitants, was the property of Mir Muhammad Khan Talpur, a relative of the ruling dynasty. In 1843 Hasan 'Ali Shah was suddenly attacked by the Jokhias, a Baluch tribe which specialized in looting villages near the banks of the Indus. The episode was not unusual, but the same cannot be said of the interpretation that Hasan 'Ali Shah gave of the event. According to tradition, 72 Ismailis

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8   A. W. Hughes, *Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh*, Karachi: Indus Publications, 1876 [1995], 303.

were killed in the fight while doing their best to save their imam. Hasan 'Ali Shah compared their deaths to the sacrifice of the 72 companions of Imam Husayn in Karbala. Hasan 'Ali Shah declared that these martyrs – he called them *fida'i*s – were now like the *Ahl al-Bayt*.

The Khojki manuscripts show that it was at the same time that Hasan 'Ali Shah introduced the Twelver Shiite rituals.[9] Coming as he did from Iran, it is not surprising that he had already performed them. But, if we put this together with the episode at Jherruk, it seems clear that the aim of Hasan 'Ali Shah was to move the Khojas away from the cult of the *pir*s and the influence of the *sayyid*s. He wished to convince them that the present imam was alive, that he was a superior intercessor to the *pir*s and *sayyid*s, and that his authority, going back to the first imam 'Ali and the Prophet Muhammad, stood higher than the charisma of the *pir*s. His method was to "instrumentalize" the veneration of Husayn. The Khojki collections further show that various treatises were copied in the 1870s from the Twelver Shiite stock, while others were actually lithographed or printed. They relate to Imam Husayn or have been called Tales of Muharram – although one also comes across Sindhi elegies evoking the martyrdom of Hasan and Husayn *(marsyas)*.

Shiite data in the Sindhi literature of the Khojas

Except for the important work of cataloguing, nothing has been done in the study of Sindhi Ismaili literature, either in the Ismaili community itself or in the academic world. The existing Sindhi data may be broken down into three categories: 1) Khojki manuscripts, 2) lithographed and printed Khojki data, and 3) non-Khojki Sindhi data. The first category is by far the most important since, despite a pioneering

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9   The expression "Khojki manuscripts" refers to those written in the Khojki, or Khoja Sindhi, script, which is no longer in use today. The Khojki alphabet was close to ones used by other communities in Sindh, as for instance the Memons or the Lohanas.

article by Sherali Alidina,[10] the printed works have not yet been systematically recorded. Most of the manuscripts are from a single period: the nineteenth century. The question is why we have so few from the preceding centuries, especially the eighteenth. Does it mean that tradition was then still oral? And, in that case, why did the Khojas begin to write their religious literature in the nineteenth century? Did it have to do with the appearance of their imam, Hasan ʿAli Shah? Further investigation will be necessary to throw light on these matters.

The lithographed and printed data are, of course, usually more recent. The Pakistani Ismailis were still using lithography in the 1960s, but the coming of the printing press brought better control of the newly-born institutions concerned with the circulation of religious literature. This Sindhi Ismaili material shows both the place of the Sindhi community among the Ismailis, and the questions that their intellectuals raised about their shifting identity. The last episode in this evolution occurred a few years ago, in 1992, when the Pakistani Ismaili religious centre decided to publish the *ginan*s in Sindhi translation.

The first part of this category consists of prayers and various addresses to the prophets and the imams, as well as to their families. A lot of popular Islamic material is included, such as the many *marsiya* elegies devoted to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. In the collections, the *marsiya*s are all composed in Sindhi, and they concern the first three imams and the main figures of Karbala issuing from the *Ahl al-Bayt*. The India Office Library has some collections of *marsiyas* – a form of literature particularly appreciated by the Sindhis. It is significant that all the great poets and scholars of Sindh, from Shah ʿAbd al-Latif to Nabi Bakhsh Baloch, have devoted a work to these elegies. *Marsiyas* seem to be in harmony with the Sindhi sense of pathos. Last but not least, it must be noted that *marsiyas* were not at all limited to the Shiite community.

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10   S. Alidina, "The Contribution to Ismaili Studies by the 'Shakespeare of Sindh', the 'Shidi Sage' and others in Sindhi Language", *Ismaili Mirror* (Karachi), December 1984, 31–37.

Various kinds of Muslim treatise are to be found in the manuscripts. First are the *bayan*s, attributed to either Imam Husayn or Imam Jaʻfar Sadiq. Then there are the *risalas*, no fewer than four of which are attributed to the same Jaʻfar Sadiq, the most important author in this group. Other types of religious work include the *majalis*, the *nur namo* and the *galio*. The *galio*, which consists of religious instruction attributed to the Prophet or imams, may either be a separate work or be included in another. Only one manuscript is entitled *Fath Namo (Book of Conquest)*, and it is attributed to Imam ʻAli. *Fath Namo*, which was a common religious form in Sindhi literature,[11] tells of heroic deeds in battle. Another treatise is attributed to Imam Husayn, with the title *Rawayat*. Finally, other religious treatises are attributed or related to *Ahl al-Bayt* or certain imams. Some deal with soteriological issues or with more popular matters such as *karamat*.

The most numerous treatises attributed to Shiite imams are undoubtedly those on divination. This category, certainly the most neglected by scholars,[12] shows how powerful is the conception of knowledge, the so-called "great tradition". *Fal nama*s and *Khab nama*s are obviously parts of a "little" tradition, but the fact that they number thirteen items testifies to their importance. According to Burton,[13] occultism played a fundamental role in the everyday life of the Sindhis. The *Fal nama*s, or *Books of Divination*, are the most abundant of all the Sindhi manuscripts in the collections, attributable to various figures such as Imam ʻAli or even Pir Sadr al-Din. However, the most quoted author is once again Imam Jaʻfar Sadiq. The similar group of the *Khab nama*s, or interpretative *Books of Dreams*, is also attributed to Imam Jaʻfar Sadiq. (In South Asian traditional society, dreams have always been a privileged link to the prophets or imams, and other charismatic

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11   R. Burton, *Sindh and the Races That Inhabit the Valley of the Indus*, Karachi: Indus Publications, 1851 [1986], 79.
12   One of the few exceptions is T. Fahd's monumental thesis *La divination arabe. Etudes religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l'Islam*, Paris: Sindbad, 1987.
13   Op. cit.

figures such as the *pir*s.) The manuscripts also contain various magical figures such as multi-coloured squares.

The enigmatic cult of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya

In 1839 a British officer, Lieutenant Delhoste, mentioned in a report the obscure story of one "Shaykh Amin".[14] Around forty years later, the first Gazetteer of Sindh province stated that six hundred Muslims and Hindus had gathered for the annual fair *(mela)* in November.[15] And a few years further on, in 1883, a British traveller spoke of the saint "Shaykh Amin Pir" and claimed him to be a son of Hazrat 'Ali. According to Ross, the *darga* is visited each year by thousands of pilgrims and is one of the most sacred sites for Sindhi Hindus; they come here for the forgiveness of minor sins, while for the major ones they must go to Narayansar, in Kuchh.[16]

Local tradition insists that Amin Pir is a *laqab* for Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya, who, as a son not of Fatima but of "al-Hanafiyya", was not a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. Some elders of the Ismaili community assert that 'Ali Shah, Hasan 'Ali Shah's son, "invented" this saint to stop the Khojas visiting other *darga*s. Moreover, it was in the first century of Islamic history, in connection with Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya, that the notion of *mahdi* originally appeared. Al-Mukhtar, leader of the Kaysanis, pioneered the use of the word *mahdi*, as well as its application to Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya. The Kaysanis were also the first to develop the concepts of occultation *(ghayba)* and return *(raj'a)*.

'Ali Shah chose Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya to assert the particular tradition of the Ismailis, which was not the same as that of the Twelvers. Perhaps Ibn Khallikan gives us the definitive evidence of this when he

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14 B. H. Thomas (ed.), *Memoirs on Sind*, 2 vols, Karachi: Karimsons, 1855 [1979], 252.
15 A. W. Hughes, op.cit., 252.
16 D. Ross, *The Land of the Five Rivers and Sindh. Sketches Historical and Descriptive*, Karachi: Allied Books Co., 1885 [1990], 26.

says that Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya was the son of a Sindhi woman.[17]
Slowly, the religious renewal brought by Hasan 'Ali Shah and his son
'Ali Shah bore fruit. With the creation of Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya's
darga, 'Ali Shah may be said to have been pursuing a charismatic cen-
tralization. This went together with the eradication of some of the nu-
merous saints the Khojas were worshipping in the delta. One narrative
has it that the imam himself destroyed a *darga* in Mirpur Sakhro, as
well as the *darga* of Aqa Jamyal Shah Datar, in Sindh and in Kathiawar.
'Ali Shah is supposed to have said: "There is no master *(aqa)* nor giver
(datar) on earth except the imam of the time!"

Muharram from marginalization to prohibition

The coming of the imam to the Indian subcontinent had disturbed the
century-old organization of the Khojas and other castes related to or
associated with them. Some groups refused to recognize the more present
authority of the imams and preferred to convert to Sunnism or Twelver
Shiism. When Sultan Muhammad Shah was proclaimed imam in 1885,
he was eight years old; a privy council was set up, composed of his
mother, some family elders, and leaders of the Ismaili community. At
the end of the nineteenth century, when he reached adulthood, the
social and religious situation of the Khojas was not yet well established.
Sultan Muhammad Shah's first task was to fight the spread of Twelver
rituals in his own community and to reinforce the specificity of the
Ismaili tradition. For this, he had to prove the superiority of the living
imam, and to demonstrate that he was much more powerful than the
concealed imam and the *mujtahid*s of the Twelver Shiites.

Between 1885 and 1905, most of Sultan Muhammad Shah's *farman*s
were designed to reaffirm the permanence and continuity of the imamate.
On the day he was enthroned in Bombay, he delivered a very important
farman in which he referred not to Husayn but to 'Ali and the Prophet

17 Quoted in A. Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*, Leiden: E. J. Brill,
    1980, 25.

Muhammad: "I am the descendant of Prophet and Hazrat Amir-ul-Mo'minin […]. I am the Noor of both Hazrat Ali and the Holy Prophet (Mohamed)".[18] He stated that the imams changed physically, but that the *nur* was eternal and unique. The renewal of the imamate under Sultan Muhammad Shah not only created a distinction within the Shiite world. By declaring that he was both imam and *pir*, it put an end to the long tradition that the *pir* was a different person (even if, for many years, he had usually been the heir of the imam).

All these changes could not be accepted by the Khojas without a profound reform of their intellectual environment. Sultan Muhammad Shah's work of renewal was based mainly on the formulation of a new ethics and on a balancing of *zahir* and *batin* that led eventually to the concept of "paradise on earth". The new ethics for the Ismaili community focused on the dual notion of sacrifice and service. Quoting historical figures from the early history of Islam, he maintained that the improvement of humanity was not possible unless everyone sacrificed his own interest to service of the community. Sultan Muhammad Shah developed this idea in a multiplicity of fields, including the nation, the *umma* and the Ismaili community.

Shiite Influence on the Sufi Cults in Gujarat and Sindh

Muharram and the worship of saints in Gujarat

We have seen that some of the Muslims in Bombay were Gujaratis. For Campbell, the Indian additions to Muharram ceremonies "have their roots in the deep rich soil of Hindu spirit-belief".[19] Among the Sunnis of northern Gujarat they were a time for sadness, and the poorest women

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18 *Precious Pearls*, n.d.: 1.
19 J. M. Campbell, *Muslim and Parsis Castes and Tribes of Gujarat*, Gurgaon: Vintage Books, 1899 [1990], 137.

sang funeral elegies and beat their chests during the first ten days of Muharram. In the South, however, the mourning changed after the fourth day into merriment and masquerade: some went about in bands, singing and recounting the story of Hasan and Husayn, while others, especially among the lower classes, painted themselves as tigers and went begging from house to house.

In Gujarat a possession ritual was performed. It is a custom related to the Shiite belief that the wedding between Qasim (Hasan's son and Husayn's nephew) and Sakina (Husayn's daughter) was stopped by the slaughter of the bridegroom on the battlefield of Karbala. Some people vow to be the bridegroom *(dula)*. A hole is dug and the *dula* walks around it seven or eleven times. Campbell wrote:

> The people round keep up a chorus of Dula Dula Dula Dula to the measure of which the person wishing to be possessed sways at first in gentle and by degrees in more violent oscillations. When the full power of the breath or hal fills the devotee, that is, when his eyeballs turn up and become fixed in a stony stare and his body grows cold, he is made to keep his face bowed among the peacock feathers. After his face has been for some time pressed in the feathers, the spirit seizes him and he rushes out heedless of water and fire.[20]

The *dula*'s friends then guide him to the *akhada*s, the places where the *tabut*s are kept, and on his way many wives ask him to bless their children, to remove a rival, or to cast out a jinn. Only those can become possessed who have vowed to be a *dula*, and no woman can be possessed by the *dula* spirit.

Except for the *dula* ritual, the principal celebration of Muharram in Gujarat is the *tabut* procession. These miniature shrines are kept in private houses for several days, and on the night of the ninth they are taken round the main streets. As the procession passes, poor Hindu and Muslim men and women in fulfilment of vows not infrequently throw themselves in the roadway and roll in front of the *tabut*s. On the tenth day, with much show and noise, the *tabut* owners take them in a procession to the river or a lake, usually called Karbala, and cast them into the water.

20 Ibid., 138.

Is there a Shiite element in the ghazal*s of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar?*

The Shiite influence is also important in Pakistani Sufism. Let us turn to the case of Sayyid Usman Marwandi, better known as Lal Shahbaz Qalandar,[21] who was born in 573 A.H. (1177–78 A.D.) at Marwand or Marand in Azerbaijan, close to the city of Tabriz famous as the birthplace of Shams-i Tabrizi, the mentor of Jalal al-Din Rumi. Lal Shahbaz Qalandar was the son of Sayyid Ibrahim Kabir al-Din, whose ancestors had migrated from Iraq to Mashhad, then moved to Marand. The family traced their descent from the Shiite imam, Ja'far Sadiq, through his son Ismail, although most authors say that he was not an Ismaili. However, the Ismailis in Sindh and elsewhere claim him to be one of them, as a son of the Ismaili *pir* Hasan Kabir al-Din. From his early years, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar showed strong religious inclinations. At the age of seven he knew the Koran by heart, and by the time he was twenty-four he was proficient in Arabic, Persian and religious knowledge, and ready to be initiated into the Qalandariyya order.

Ziya al-Din Barani tells in his *Tarikh-e Firuz Shahi* that Lal Shahbaz Qalandar performed a *sama* in the presence of the then-governor, Muhammad Sultan Shahid, son of the sultan of Delhi Balban.[22] The governor begged Lal Shahbaz Qalandar to settle down in Multan, promising to build a *khanaqah* there and to make a land grant *(jagir)* for expenses, but the saint refused and moved away. Lal Shahbaz Qalandar then went to meet Bu 'Ali Qalandar in Panipat, near Delhi. According to a tradition, Bu Ali Qalandar told him there were too many *qalandar*s in India, and so he decided to go to the town of Sehwan Sharif, in Sindh.

Another tradition reports that Sehwan was a seat of corruption and immorality, where Muslims were treated harshly by the Hindu king

21   For more detail concerning this highly popular saint, see M. Boivin, "Reflections on La'l Shahbaz Qalandar and the Management of His Spiritual authority in Sehwan Sharif", *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 51/4 (2003), 41–74.

22   S. Digby, "Qalandars and Related Groups: Elements of Social Deviance in the Religious Life of the Delhi Sultanate", in Y. Friedman, *Islam in Asia*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1984, 71.

Jesar Raja or Raja Charbut, whom some sources present as an Ismaili. On Friday the 22nd of Shawal 949 A.H. (8 December 1251 A.D.), Lal Shahbaz Qalandar entered Sehwan at the head of a large following of *qalandari* faqirs. Soon afterwards the town was occupied by the army of Qatlagh Khan, who established the rule of the sultan of Delhi, Nasir al-Din Mahmud. This attack had been planned by some Suhrawardi sheikhs, including Baha al-Din Zakariyya and Bu 'Ali Qalandar of Panipat, and the sultan of Delhi himself.

It is well attested that the Suhrawardiyya and the Chishtiyya were active in thirteenth-century Sindh. All the prominent Sufi sheikhs are said to have paid a visit to Sehwan, among them Mu'in al-Din Hasan Chishti (d. 1236), Farid al-Din Ganj-i Shakar (d. 1265) and Nasir al-Din Chiragh Dihli, the *khalifa* of Nizam al-Din Awliyya' of Delhi (d. 1325). As we shall see, the narrative of the life of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar has become quite a classic. Some accounts have him convert the local population. There are two dates given for his death: 1274 and 1323.

Let us now consider what Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's writings tell us about him. He is said to have written two kinds of works: textbooks on Arabic grammar, and mystical poetry in the form of Persian *ghazal*s. But it is not easy to establish the extent to which the saint actually composed these works, nor can we say when they were first mentioned. It should be stressed, however, that they are usually accepted as genuine.

Although most of the booklets devoted to Lal Shahbaz Qalandar quote some of his Persian verses – very often the same verses – the lack of a critical edition is sorely felt because of the different versions of what is called his *diwan*.[23] In his *ghazal*s, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar introduces himself as a friend of "Mansur", that is, al-Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj (858–922), who is said to have visited many countries, including Sindh, and to have claimed "*Ana al-Haqq*", "I am the Truth". He also states that the friend of God is the receptacle of God *(wali Allah mazhar Allah ast)*.[24] In another *ghazal*, he refers to the concept of

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23 La'l Shahbaz Qalandar, *Diwan-e qalandar*, ed. by Illahi Bakhsh Shaykh, Sukkur (Persian text with Sindhi translation), 1997–1998.

24 Ibid., 2.

nur-i Ahmad.[25] More classical themes of Sufi thought can be found in his poetry: for instance, he mentions the *fana'* and the *baqa'* in God.[26]

Lal Shahbaz Qalandar says that he has a secret in his heart that impels him to dance. This concept is also fundamental in Shiism, where the word secrecy encompasses all the esoteric doctrines; Farid al-Din 'Attar tells us that, according to various eye witnesses, al-Hallaj was put to death for daring to divulge the secret God had revealed to him.[27] The presence of inner meaning in the writings of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar is evident from his claim that he was with Moses when the Prophet conversed with God on the mount of Toor. He also says in his verses that he both reads the Koran and puts on the sacred thread, which is the symbol of initiation in Hinduism. Although the poet presents in metaphorical language the three stages of the Sufi way – *shari'at* as the boat, *tariqat* as the sails and *haqiqat* the anchor – and often refers to *zikr*, he considers dance (or, as he calls it, *raqs*) to be the best means of reaching union with God.[28] The same verse is repeatedly quoted to sum up his philosophy: "I know nothing except love, intoxication and ecstasy."

Is it possible, after this brief account of Lal Shahbaz Qaladanr's poetry, to decide whether or not he was a Shiite? Although we have discovered some pointers, the symbols used in Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's cult will provide the final evidence.

Some Shiite symbols in the cult of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar

The influence of Shiism in South Asian Sufism is evident from the use of specific symbols and referents. In the case of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, three main features should be mentioned: the association of his *maqam*s with the first imam Ali, the use of Shiite mottoes, and the display of

25 Ibid., 46.
26 Ibid., 58.
27 F. Attar, *Le mémorial des saints*, transl. from Uygur by A. Pavet de Courteille, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1976, 308.
28 Ibid., 148.

relics associated with the Shiite imams. Various sites in and around Sehwan are traditionally said to be the places *(maqams)* of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, where the saint performed exercises related to his asceticism. The exercise most frequently mentioned is the *chilla*, which usually refers to a forty-day fast, but through a metonymic process the word has also come to denote the place where the exercise is performed.

There is a *chilla* in Sehwan, very close to the *qalandar*'s *darbar*. It is noteworthy that the first Imam, 'Ali, is supposed to have passed through all the *chilla*s; his footprints *(shah-jo qaddam)*, and even those of his horse, are visible in the rock. Surprisingly, however, 'Ali is said to have passed through the place without halting there even for a short while. The tradition does not say where he was bound.

The influence of Shiism is evident to anyone walking the streets of Sehwan around the *darbar*. Many Sunni inhabitants of the town bear traditional Shiite names such as Ghulam Husayn or Mazar 'Ali, and the most common salutation is not *"Salam alaykum"* but *"Ya 'Ali madad"*. There are indeed many little details from everyday life. One particular motto is to be found at various places near the shrine itself, though it is not really on view during the year as it is written at places that cannot be seen from outside by a passer-by. But for the *'urs* it is displayed above the main entrance on a large banner several metres long. The motto is: "'Ali allah". The faqirs of the *darbar* will explain that this means Allah is the highest. But Shiites from outside Sehwan would be horrified to see it.

A number of relics are exhibited either in the *darbar* or for special ceremonies such as the *'urs*. The two most important are the *gajgah* and Zay al-Abidin's stone. The *gajgah* is a very common object in Sindh which symbolizes the *Panj Tan Pak*, who are Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn, known as the Ahl al-Bayt. Since it is in the shape of an open hand, it is usually called *panja*. The *gajgah* is said to have been Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's personnal *panja*. It is made of silver, and once a year, for the *'urs*, it is paraded through the streets of Sehwan by the Shiite Sayyids. The importance attributed to the *gajgah* implies that Lal Shahbaz Qalandar is one of the Ahl al-Bayt.

The relic most widely venerated in Sehwan is Zayn al-'Abidin's stone. According to local tradition, it dates back to the Shiite imam Zayn al-

'Abidin, who was forced to wear it around his neck by Yazid when he had to walk from Karbala to Damascus; it meant that the imam was not able to walk upright. Lal Shahbaz acquired the stone through his ancestor, the imam's grandson, Ja'far Sadiq. Lal Shahbaz wore it all his life as a symbol of humility. Today the stone is covered with silver leaves; devotees pour water on it, drink a little and put the rest in small bottles to take back home.

The Shiite Sayyids and the instrumentalization of Muharram

The Shiite Sayyids are the most powerful citizens of Sehwan, and for them the Muharram celebrations are the best opportunity to display their power and wealth. The two branches of Sayyid families, the Sabzwaris and the Lakyaris, sponsor many different events during the first days of the month.

The celebration of Muharram shows that the Sayyid families have reached a compromise for the purpose of symbolizing their power in the city. Every evening, one or two processions are organized through the narrow lanes of Sehwan. The first part is made up of camels led by Jats, with young members of the Sayyid families playing big drums *(nagharos)* on their backs. The second part is the chorus, which stops regularly to recite the tragic events at the fateful battle of Karbala. The third part involves the parading of a relic – *tabut*, *jhula* or the horse *Zul Janna*, for example – which symbolizes a particular episode in the battle. The chorus sings *marsiya*s in Sindhi and in Urdu. Special ceremonies are also performed in private spaces.

The heads *(sajjada nashins)* of Katl Dhani organize the changing of their own *'alam* in their *kafi*,[29] with hundreds and hundreds of *murid*s. For the occasion, a special *matam* is performed: the Sayyids and other devotees, including some faqirs, are in a circle around the *'alam*. To the sound of the flute *(sharnai)* and drum *(dholak)* played by professional musicians *(manghanars)*, one person climbs on the *'alam* while the oth-

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29 *Kafi* is the Sindhi name used in Sehwan for the *khanqah*, the Sufi hospice.

ers beat their breasts and turn around it. After this ceremony, the *murid*s have a meal with the Sayyid family, and then the *zari pak* procession can begin. A *zari pak* is a miniaturized representation of Imam Husayn's shrine, but this one, commonly known as the *taziah*, is especially large and well embellished. A Sabzwari branch of the Sayyids, who are the owners of the *kafi* of Katl Dhani, are in charge of it.

The 7th of Muharram is an important day because it is when the first *matam*s are performed with the *zandjir zan*s in the procession. On the same day each Sayyid family organizes its own procession, though at different times. The Lakyari's horse is paraded around 10 pm and the Sabzwari's around 3 am. On the 8th and 9th, the procession ends with the nuptial bed *(sej)*, symbolizing Qasim's wedding. For this happy commemoration, nobody will perform *matam* with the *zandjir zan*. On the tenth, the day of 'Ashura', the *taziah* is shown in the crowded streets of Sehwan.

The government of Pakistan, in the shape of the Awqaf Department, now manages Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's mausoleum. It also intervenes in the Muharram celebrations by deciding which of the Sayyid families will hold the processional *gajgah*, the most important symbol relating to Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. However, as in the 'urs but more than in any other religious event in Sehwan, the Muharram ceremonies may be understood as a metaphor for the collective ownership of spiritual power by the Sayyid families.

Conclusion

Such a broad theme permits of only a provisional conclusion. Our aim here has been simply to highlight the particularity of Muharram in this part of South Asia, as well as the influence of Shiite culture. With regard to the significance of the ceremonies proper, the date of Partition marks a dual watershed. First, in the period before 1947, Hindus took part in the procession and built their own *tabut*s; their calendar cel-

ebrated what they called Husayn's birthday *(Imam jayanti)*, namely the commemoration of his martyrdom, like that of Shiva or Vishnu. Second, the dual function of Muharram, at once integrative and subversive, is evident from the pre-1947 history of the celebrations in Bombay.

With the creation of Pakistan, the Muhajirs were able to import the Muharram celebrations into the city of Karachi for the first time. Owing to the Islamic identity of the newly born state, the syncretistic elements and the dimension of rejoicing were abandoned. Yet the integrative function of Muharram was still in evidence. For some Shiite communities, Muharram was the only stage on which they were able to face Karachi society as a whole. On the individual level, the flagellation ritual was a means of purification and a way of asserting claims to virility within one's group.

The Shiite symbols and the Muharram celebrations have played many other roles in South Asia. In the case of the Khojas, the followers of the living imam (the Aga Khan), we have seen that Aga Khan I increased the Shiite symbols, literature and rituals within the Khoja community. In Sindh and Gujarat, where the Khojas had been followers of the *pir*s and *sayyid*s, he was able to convince them that, as the heir of Imam Husayn, he was the one who could offer them salvation; the best reward a Khoja could receive from him, for the service of the imam, was to be included among the Ahl al-Bayt. In a second stage, when some Khojas had become too deeply involved in Twelver Shiism and deserted the spiritual authority of the Aga Khans, Aga Khan II invented the cult of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, a kind of "heterodox" imam of the Shiites and the first to be considered a supreme saviour *(mahdi).* The final stage occurred when Aga Khan III forbade all rituals relating to Muharram and to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his family.

Last but not least is the problem of the influence of Shiite symbols on Sufism. It is astonishing to note the frequency of Shiite symbols in the Sufi *darga*s of South Asia, and further investigation will be required to ascertain whether this is a peculiarity of the region. However, the *darbar* of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan Sharif may provide a useful case study.

Three points should be emphasized in this regard. First, Lal Shabaz is linked to the Shiite imams through a physical rather than a spiritual genealogy: he is the descendant of the sixth imam Ja'far Sadiq through his son Ismail – who was held as the true imam by the future Ismailis – instead of through Musa Kazim, the seventh imam of the Twelver Shiites. Second, the only relic that devotees can venerate in the *darbar* is Imam Zayn al-'Abidin's stone, which, according to local tradition, is the stone that the Umayyad caliph Yazid attached to the imam's neck to humiliate him. And third, the Shiite Sayyids succeeded in bringing all the *darbar* under their control, despite the weakness of the Shiites in Sehwan, and despite the nationalization carried out by the Pakistan government in the 1960s. The identification of Lal Shabaz Qalandar with the imam is such that Shiites performed *matam* for his '*urs* – an especially important point because it highlights the diversity of Islamic practices in Pakistan, which is usually presented by Pakistani officials, and the international press, as a monolithic Islamic republic.

The study of three different cases allows us to draw out certain features peculiar to the South Asian context. The first may be termed the indigenization process. The study of colonial Bombay provides evidence of how South Indian populations turned the Muharram celebrations into a Hindu procession: Imam Husayn became a charismatic figure of the Hindus, among other divinities. Second, some Shiite rituals and symbols were to a certain extent "de-shiitized", a strictly Shiite identity apparently being restricted to the upper classes, especially the Sayyids. Third, in the field of popular religion, Shiite symbols were used in various cults to put together new religious constructs better adapted to a particular time and place. Finally, Shiite elements, like elements of other religions in South Asia, were mainly used in an aggregative process to give birth to local religious identities.

Muharram rituals and Shiite symbols evince a great capacity for adaptation in the plurality of South Asian contexts. Although they are not part of the political evolution, nor of the politicization of religion on either the Islamic or the Hindu side, they have sunk roots in what we may call South Asian culture. Muharram has been appropriated by South Indian populations, Muslim and Hindu, but it has also adopted

some features of Indian culture. In the social field, Muharram continues to allow destitute people and communities to assert their existence before the middle classes of Karachi. However, it is in the devotional field that the Shiite influence is strongest: the pathos associated with the martyrdom of the Shiite imams and their families has long had a pervasive presence among the populations of South Asia.

Alessandro Monsutti

Image of the Self, Image of the Other: Social Organization and the Role of 'Ashura' among the Hazaras of Quetta (Pakistan)

'Ashura' as a mode of expression

The great majority of Shiites in Afghanistan are Hazaras.[1] Many wars and many migratory movements have marked their past. The first Hazaras settled in Quetta (then part of British India, today part of Pakistan) at the end of the nineteenth century, to escape the bloody conquest of their region of origin (the Hazarajat, in the centre of contemporary Afghanistan) by 'Abdur Rahman, the emir of Kabul. This event still lives on in the popular memory and has weighed heavily all through the twentieth century on the relationship between the Hazaras and the central government. A drought resulting in extreme hardship brought about a new exodus in the early seventies, and further mass migration was caused by the war that devastated Afghanistan following the Communist coup in 1978 and the Soviet invasion in 1979. The establishment of the Hazaras in Quetta is the outcome of a series of dramatic events.

For many Hazaras today, their painful history mirrors the tragic destiny of the Imam Husayn, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, who was killed at Karbala in 680 AD by the forces of the Umayyad caliph. Each year, during the month of Muharram, the commemoration of this

1 In the mid-nineties, the population of Afghanistan was estimated at more than 22 million inhabitants. The Hazaras – a certain number of Sunnite groups included – are thought to constitute between 10 and 19 per cent and the twelver Shiites (Hazaras, Qizilbash, Persian speakers of the region of Herat …) 15 per cent of the total (www.state.gov, 31.05.04).

event is of capital importance for Shiites all around the world. For the Hazaras, it is a reminder of the injustices and violence they have faced.

In Quetta the faithful gather every evening to pray and sing, but the climax is reached on the tenth day of Muharram, 'Ashura', anniversary of Husayn's death. Penitents are grouped in processions by neighbourhood, with a certain amount of competitive spirit among them; some take this to the point of hitting themselves with chains and razorblades. They hope to expiate their sins, to share the sufferings of Husayn and to express a feeling of guilt that the Shiite community did not assist him in his struggle against a more powerful enemy. They also wish to proclaim that they are ready to fight for a better world.

Whereas this celebration used to be almost ignored in the Hazarajat, and was even unknown in its most extreme forms, Hazaras have progressively adopted it in Kabul since the middle of the twentieth century, and a parallel evolution has taken place in Quetta. As a corollary to the politicisation of social relationships and the relative detribalisation of Hazara society in an urban migratory context – the importance of tribal segments, scattered in different parts of the city, is counterbalanced by that of neighbourhood groups – the commemoration of Husayn's martyrdom has become an integral element of Hazara culture and identity, a mode of self-presentation and representation in the face of other groups considered hostile or impious and associated with the Umayyads of Islam's early days.

The origin of the Hazaras and their relationship to Shiism

The Hazaras' historical origin and the conditions of their conversion to Shiism are controversial.[2] Even the etymology of the name is uncer-

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2   E. E. Bacon, "The Inquiry into the History of the Hazara Mongols of Afghanistan", *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 7(3), 1951, 230–247; H. F. Schurmann, *The Mongols of Afghanistan: An Ethnography of the Moghôls and Related*

tain. Since *hazar* means "thousand" in Persian, most authors believe it to refer to the Mongol word *minggan*, which has the same meaning. In Genghis Khan's time, it was used to designate a unit of a thousand warriors, the unit of measure of the Mongol armies; by extension, it can also mean "tribe".

It is historically conceivable that Turkish and Mongol groups, progressively driven off the Hindu Kush (from Central Asia in the North, and from Iran in the West) between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, mixed with the local population and adopted their language. Since the sixteenth century, the term *hazara* has referred more to a sociopolitical position than to a homogeneous population, as it is used to designate groups that have little in common other than their situation of geographical isolation and political autonomy. Peripheral areas in the Middle East have always witnessed the construction of groups with heterogeneous origins, which have emerged through a continuous process of inclusion and exclusion, of differentiation from and resistance to the central power. Thus, a shared sense of belonging does not necessarily signify a common historical origin. Hazara identity is the result of a process of marginalisation.

The relationship between Hazaras and Shiism must also be seen as a dynamic process. Their religious affiliation is probably the result of two distinct factors: the part played in their complex ethnogenesis by the Ilkhans, the Mongol dynasty of Iran, whose sovereign Ghazan Khan is said to have converted to Shiism at the end of the thirteenth century; and the later impact of the Safavides, who declared Shiism the official religion of Iran and extended their zone of influence to contemporary Afghanistan under the reign of Shah 'Abbas (1587–1629). Beyond any direct legacy or influence, however, the conversion of Hazaras to Shiism may have been due to a long process of opposition to neighbouring Sunni populations, which has continued down to this day.

Peoples of Afghanistan, The Hague: Mouton, 1962; H. Poladi, *The Hazaras*, Stockton (Cal.): Mughal Publishing, 1989; S. A. Mousavi, *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study*, Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998.

The struggle of the Hazaras in 1891–1893 against the emir of Kabul, ʿAbdur Rahman, was marked by a succession of massacres and atrocities and was accompanied with a deep split between Shiites and Sunnis.[3] The painful memory that these events left with the Hazaras is still sharply present, as one can see in the revolutionary songs of the 1980s;[4] the trauma is deep and still colours relations between communities. The war that tore Afghanistan apart after the Communist coup in April 1978 further intensified the split. For, as in the earlier conflict, religious differences were used to justify military and political actions.

Although their religious practices, centred on the person of ʿAli and members of his family, developed for a long time outside the mainstreams of scriptural Shiism,[5] the Hazaras opened up to Iranian influence in the late twentieth century. This brought about a deep change in social relations. For a long time specialists, whether *sayyid*[6] or simple mullahs, offered their magical and religious services to confront life's suffering, thereby allowing Hazaras to develop a range of social relationships.[7] But the growth of political activism has discredited such traditional intermediaries, whose role has been sharply diminished as a result.

3   H. K. Kakar, *The Pacification of the Hazaras of Afghanistan*, New York: Afghanistan Council of the Asia Society [Occasional Paper 4], 1973; Poladi, *op. cit.*; Mousavi, *op. cit.*

4   R. Bindemann, "Kunst und Widerstand: 'Revolutionäre' und 'nationale' Lieder der Hazara", in E. Grötzbach (ed.), *Neue Beiträge zur Afghanistanforschung*, Liestal: Bibliotheca Afghanica, 1988, 85–100.

5   D. B. Edwards, "The Evolution of Shiʿi Political Dissent in Afghanistan", in J. R. I. Cole, N. R. Keddie (eds), *Shiʿism and Social Protest*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986, 201–229.

6   Descendants of the Prophet Muhammad by his daughter Fatima.

7   R. Canfield, "Suffering as a Religious Imperative in Afghanistan", in A. Bharati (ed.), *The Realm of the Extra-Human. Ideas and Actions*, Paris, The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1976, 101–122.

Stages of the Hazara migration to Quetta

Quetta, capital of the Pakistani province of Baluchistan, is situated in a basin surrounded by mountains more than three thousand metres high. Its importance is due to the fact that it lies at a crossroads linking the Sind plains (by the Bolan Pass), Afghanistan (by the Khojak Pass and the frontier town of Chaman) and Iran (over the high desert plateaux of Baluchistan). In the nineteenth century, the British feverishly resisted Russian penetration in Central Asia, and in 1839, during the first Anglo-Afghan war, they temporarily occupied the region. In 1877 a British military contingent established itself in Quetta, but it was only in 1887, after the second Anglo-Afghan war (1878–1880), that the region was declared a British territory. In 1947, despite some disturbances, Quetta and Baluchistan joined the new state of Pakistan.

In 1981, according to a census, the town had 285,000 inhabitants and the district 380,000.[8] For the more recent period, in the absence of reliable data, we have to be content with an unofficial estimate that the population of Quetta had reached 800,000 or even 1,000,000 by the middle of the 1990s. This impressive demographic increase was mostly due to the influx of Afghan refugees. By virtue of their dynamism and their willingness to accept low incomes, they have taken over many sectors of the local economy and sometimes put themselves at odds with the original population. Their arrival has upset the fragile political equilibrium in the province of Baluchistan. It is thus conceivable that the number of Pashtuns is today higher than the number of Baluch in Quetta, or for that matter in the entire province – a situation which cannot but provoke deep tensions.

In Pakistan, the Hazaras constitute an essentially urban population; they are probably the third ethnic group in the agglomeration of Quetta (after the Pashtuns and the Baluch) and the main Shiite community (the other Shiites come from the town of Kandahar, the Panjab or the

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8   CD-ROM 99, *Enyclopædia Britannica*.

north of Pakistan). They inhabit the districts of Alamdar Road, Toghi Road and Marriabad (east), and lately they have colonized a large area in the west of the town. They came to live in Quetta in successive waves. Many arrived after 'Abdur Rahman's subjugation of Hazarajat, looking for shelter in British-controlled territories to escape the authority of the emir of Kabul. The terrible famine that struck large parts of Afghanistan in the early 1970s, then the Communist coup and the Soviet intervention, triggered a stronger migratory flow which in many cases has had a more definitive character (although to-and-fro movements have never ceased between Hazarajat and Quetta). Few Hazaras have settled in the refugee camps of Pakistan: they preferred from the beginning to try their luck in urban surroundings and have thus benefited little from the infrastructure intended for refugees. In the 1980s it was mostly the rural population that was affected, but after 1992 townspeople too left Afghanistan in large numbers. There were only 40,000 Hazaras in Quetta in 1971, already 50–60,000 in 1975,[9] and by the mid-nineties local NGOs were estimating a community of 100,000 to 120,000. Subsequently, there were further mass influxes after the Taliban captured Kabul (September 1996) and after the fall of Hazarajat (September 1998).

The history of Hazara settlement may be seen in the urban surroundings of Quetta. Most descendants of the first immigrants still live on hills on the eastern fringes of the bazaar, which began to be populated in the early years of the twentieth century. With the inward migration of the late 1960s and especially the 1970s, this area between the mountain (the Mordar, on the eastern and southern side) and the military fields (on the east side of Toghi Road) witnessed remarkable growth and soon reached saturation point; further expansion was prevented by the topography, as the rocky hills surrounding the area are too steep. New land has had to be found to absorb recent arrivals as well as the increase in the existing population. Since the end of the eighties, the

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9   M. Owtadolajam, *A Sociological Study of the Hazara Tribe in Baluchistan (An Analysis of Sociocultural Change)*, Karachi: University of Karachi, Department of Sociology, 1976, 3.

neighbourhoods of Brewery, Hazara Town, Aliabad, Husaynabad and Kerani Road, on the opposing side of the agglomeration (west of Quetta), have undergone considerable growth undeterred by the hastily built infrastructure (mostly dirt roads, patchy connection to mains water). These were orchard zones belong to the Baluch, from whom the Hazaras had to purchase plots to build their houses. Given the constant arrival of new additions to the population, settled neighbourly relations were initially rather weak in Brewery and Hazara Town, but social life has gradually developed through contact in shared community spaces.

Association by place of origin and by neighbourhood

The inhabitants of a city like Quetta have all manner of common interests, ranging from urban maintenance (sewage repairs, roadworks, etc.) to the school system. By getting together, the Hazaras have constituted pressure groups to influence the decisions of the responsible authorities; their solidarity is most in evidence during funerals and the month of Muharram. The form of socialization resulting from such associations, which goes well beyond genealogical ties, is gaining in importance in Quetta, as the political and social structures of the Hazaras undergo rapid change and the power of traditional leaders is eroded. In the Hazarajat itself, tribal chiefs *(mir)* have been politically and militarily ousted by religious leaders *(sheykh)*, while the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad *(sayyid)* have been increasingly belittled.[10] In Quetta, however, things have evolved differently: authority does not directly depend on personal wealth and property, and so tribal chiefs, deprived of their traditional sources of power (land, cattle, money, etc.), have never

10   O. Roy, *L'Afghanistan: Islam et modernité politique*, Paris: Seuil, 1985, 194–205; Bindermann, *op. cit.*; K. B. Harpviken, *Political Mobilization among the Hazara of Afghanistan: 1978–1992*, Oslo: Department of Sociology [Rapport 9], 1996.

exerted a major influence there. They are shown formal respect but are not consulted over problem-solving. Instead, the pre-eminent figures of the Hazara community have become the intermediaries who know the wheels of the Pakistani government machine; their influence derives from their practical sense, their social connections and their know-how, not from the kind of ties that unite members of a tribal group. The descendants of the first migrants, longstanding Pakistanis who form quite a prosperous urban community, function as protectors or employers for the newcomers. And, as we have seen, the relatively subordinate position of the newcomers is spatially defined, since they have been forced to settle further and further out, in hillside and steppe where access to many economic and professional activities is limited.

Urban surroundings impose other social and economic constraints than those experienced in the village of origin in Afghanistan. The lifestyles and forms of co-operation and solidarity are different in Quetta and in Hazarajat. Whereas the Hazaras are concentrated in certain zones, the various *qawm*[11] are not grouped territorially. For, as they became more numerous and dispersed, the Hazaras were not able to settle according to their group of origin or tribal affiliation. They therefore developed mutual assistance structures that coexist and complement one other, particularly the associations of origin and neighbourhood associations around which community life is organized.

Most Hazaras in Quetta originated in the south of the Hazarajat: Jaghori, Qarabagh, region of Ghazni, but also Behsud, Day Kundi and Shahrestan. There are several dozen associations of origin. In actual fact, the criteria for belonging to one go beyond that of the *qawm*.

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11 The term *qawm* expresses well the complexity of the Afghan social reality. Most often translated by "group of solidarity", it refers to the agnatic kinship group, but the level it refers to varies: in turn, it may mean enlarged kinship, lineage, tribe or ethnic group, or even professional or religious group. See R. L. Canfield, *Faction and Conversion in a Plural Society: Religious Alignments in the Hindu Kush*, Ann Arbor: Museum of Anthropology/The University of Michigan, 1973; Roy, *op. cit.*, 23; P. Centlivres, M. Centlivres-Demont, *Et si on parlait de l'Afghanistan? Terrains et textes 1964–1980*, Neuchatel: Institut d'ethnologie; Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1988, 17–18, 36–37.

According to the size of the community, the association may be formed by tribal segment or geographical origin – a region *(manteqa)* or several districts *(ulsuwali).* But, since they came to Quetta at different stages, its members do not necessarily live in the same place. Hence there is another structure, the neighbourhood association *(mahalla)*, which groups together the inhabitants of one or two blocks, that is, a few dozen families.

In both cases, heads of families get together more or less every month to discuss community affairs. A representative is chosen among them, respectively named the *kalan-e qawm* or *kalan-e mahalla* (*kalan* meaning "big"). The procedure for his appointment is complex: adult males meet together, discuss and consider various elements such as reputation, relations with the Pakistani administration, previous family responsibilities, and so on. Thus, there is no formal election and the chosen person keeps his place as long as there is no major opposition. He is generally a Hazara of Pakistani nationality, descendant of the first migrants, someone who has held official responsibilities and had many social relationships outside the Hazara community. He facilitates the integration of newcomers into the society and the labour market of Quetta. It is his responsibility to resolve internal conflicts and to represent the group to the outside world. He advises members of the *qawm* and inhabitants of the *mahalla* about various disputes or procedures (road accidents, lawsuits, obtaining an identity card or a job, purchase of a plot of land, marital conflicts or payment of the brideprice etc.). He does his best always to avert the intervention of the Pakistani authorities, so that his function reminds one of the *malek* or *arbab* in Afghanistan.[12] Furthermore, the *kalan-e qawm* and the *kalan-e mahalla* collect and administer monthly contributions amounting to a few dozen rupees per family. Named *canda* (from *cand* , "how many"[13]) or sometimes *zakhira*, "reserve, treasure"), these sums may be sent to Afghani-

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12 P. Centlivres, M. Centlivres-Demont, "Village en Afghanistan", *Commentaire* 16 (1981–82), 516–525.

13 It is for this reason that the *kalan-e qawm* and the *kalan-e mahalla* are also called *sarcanda* ("chief of the *canda*").

stan for community projects (construction of schools, roads, irrigation canals, etc.), but most often they are used in Quetta. There, the *kalan* provides financial help to the most destitute and to families with a funeral to pay for, but families receive no assistance for weddings so as to discourage expenditure on luxuries.

A third community structure is the meeting place with a religious character. The Shiites of Quetta talk about *imambarga* ("imam court") or in everyday language *imambara*, the local equivalent of *takya-khana* in Iran or *membar*[14] in Hazarajat. The *imambara* generally depend upon donations and administration of their own real estate (shop rents, etc.). They are managed by a committee whose members are often descendants of the original donor.

The large *imambarga* of Quetta, facing a Sunni mosque on the corner of McConaghey Road and Khodadad Road,[15] consists of three courtyards with access to rooms used for prayers or meetings. There are also rooms for pilgrims *(zawar-khana)*, who can lodge there for a few days on their way to sacred places. The building is not oriented towards Mecca. There is a small mosque[16] in the complex, but on Friday the faithful assemble in the larger room for the main prayer, which takes place shortly after noon *(salat al-zuhr)*. All the faithful are gathered together to assert the unity of the community, but the women are hidden from the men's eyes by a long curtain.

Less than a dozen minor *imambara* stretch along Alamdar Road. Most have received their name from a regional community: the Panjabi, the Qandahari, the two Gilgiti, the Hazara, the Baltistani, etc., but this does not reflect the attendance, which is based on residence and not on place of origin. Many others may be found in the areas inhabited by Shiites. Behind large doors draped with several flags, these places are organized around a central court that opens on to several rooms serving

14 This term proper to Hazaragi comes from *minbar*, "the chair of the Mosque."
15 The site was the theatre of a terrorist attack in summer 2003 in which more than 50 people were killed.
16 The term *masjid* ("mosque") is reserved for a place exclusively dedicated to prayer.

other purposes. In some of them there is a large-scale model of the shrine of Imam Husayn in Kerbala.

In the case of the Hazaras in Quetta, co-operation has thus developed among sociologically diverse groups (groups of origin and neighbourhood groups), with lineage proximity being determinant for the *qawm* and place of residence for the *mahalla*. In the urban environment, a new sociability is emerging that offsets the importance of kinship. Individuals are beginning to evolve in a larger social circle and relationships are become more diverse.

The celebration of 'Ashura'

At the beginning of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar, flags *('alam)* are put up on each side of the entrance to the *imambara*. For the whole community it is a time of sorrow, during which no wedding is celebrated. Men wear black or green shirts and white trousers as a sign of mourning, while women avoid appearing with elegant clothes. All music is forbidden except for dirges *(nawha)*. More so than during Ramadan, life is suspended and time seems to stand still for the commemorations of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. There is excitement in the air throughout the month of Muharram, and police are to be seen everywhere because of the high tensions between Shiites and Sunnis. In addition, the committees of the *imambara* provide a well-organized and alert security force. Some shops prepare and sell the necessary instruments for self-torture, which are exhibited on the wall alongside the written names of the customers. With a meticulousness that might appear sadistic, artisans sharpen the blades before testing their sharpness with their thumb.

The committees of the *imambara* organize reunions and processions of penitents *(dasta)* during the month of Muharram. Each evening, there is plenty of animation in the streets as residents go to their local *imambara* to pray, sing and relive the martyrdom of Imam Husayn.

Late into the night loudspeakers broadcast detailed accounts of the last days of Imam Husayn, as well as dirges in which the singer ends up sobbing. Specialists *(zaker)* are called in to invoke the name of God and to narrate the unfolding of the events as they are reported by tradition: Husayn's decision to defy the Umayyad power by going to Kufa against the advice of his relatives; the encirclement of his small troop; Husayn's speech foretelling his own death and encouraging his companions to save their lives; the pangs of thirst; the winning over (and subsequent martyrdom) of several combatants of the Umayyad army; the death of Qasim, who breathes his last in the arms of his uncle Husayn after being trampled by his horses; the death of 'Ali Akbar and 'Abbas; and the final outcome, Husayn's ultimate resolution and his murder. The narration continues the following days with the journey of the survivors to the court of Damascus: Husayn's decapitated head, exhaling a marvellous perfume, recites verses from the Koran as the infidels try to beat it into silence; Zaynab, obliged to remain unveiled and exhibited like a trophy, dares to defy Yazid in a courageous sermon. Despite all the humiliations, the 'Alides' dignity is increased by these trials. Some of those present express their pain by holding their head in their hands and weeping, while others cry out and rhythmically pound their chests.

According to their means, some families take advantage of this period to organize a charity meal (*nazr* or more specifically *nazr-e Imam Husayn, nazr* meaning "votive offering, vow, promise given to God"). In 1996 I was given the opportunity to participate in such a meal, offered by a person of distinction in the Hazara community who was continuing a tradition initiated by his father; he and his brothers spent 25,000 rupees (more than 700 dollars) on the occasion. On the sixth day of Muharram they sacrificed a cow. The main courtyard of the house was open to any who presented themselves, with women gathering in an adjacent house. No formal invitation was needed: anyone could attend, and several hundred visitors did actually come to eat. Fourteen cauldrons for cooking were lined up on the side of the road in front of the entrance to the house. The host hired the services of an Uzbek cook, who furnished the necessary implements. A few girls waited in the street holding a pan. After half an hour, they were allowed in by

a side door and soon left for home fully laden with food. The first guests were served shortly after noon. Relatives of the host carried a cauldron into the courtyard: rice, chickpeas and meat. The yard was jammed and it was hard to move. One had to make one's way among people sitting cross-legged on the floor. Younger members of the family began the distribution on common serving plates, from which people ate with their hands. Once their appetite was satisfied, they left and were replaced by newcomers. They gave thanks by saying *khoda nazr-e shoma qabul kona!,* "may God accept your offer!" Around 2.00 pm, preceded by the standard bearer and a kind of a conductor who directed the group while walking backwards, a procession of penitents from the nearby *imambara* engulfed the courtyard. The people present alternately sang a monotonous chant together and pounded their chests rhythmically and violently, thereby producing an impressive muffled noise.[17] Then they suddenly stopped and sat down to eat. Less than half an hour later, they left the courtyard leaving only close relatives and neighbours.

The expression of pain gradually increased in intensity and reached its climax on 'Ashura', the tenth day. Early in the morning many people walked down Alamdar Road (the main axis of the large Shiite district on the east side of Quetta), to go to Mizam Chowk, a square from which the bazaars radiate. All the shops were closed, and access to the town centre was controlled by police who screened people as they went back and forth. The pictures of Indian actresses that normally hung on the walls of the teahouse had been removed. Newspapers were placed on the windows of the video shops to hide their interiors. The tension could be felt, although the crowd remained disciplined. Songs and lamentations alternated with the self-torture, when the only audible sound was the one produced by chains swishing through air before rhythmically hitting the backs of the penitents grouped in the middle of the square. Some used chains with knives on the end, while others lacerated their chests with razor blades held between their fingers. Blood squirted

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17   Pounding one's chest during the *Muharram* is called *sina-zani* (from *sina,* "chest", and *zadan*, "to strike").

on the onlookers' clothes and red streams formed on the dusty ground. Before noon, the exhausted crowd slowly dispersed. Many men with a hallucinated look in their eyes had the back of their shirt completely soaked with blood; friends helped them to walk upright. Secondary groups retreated and lamentations could still be heard. At the end of the afternoon, processions moved up Alamdar Road to go to the various *imambara* in the neighbourhood. On the left side, a small rope protected a space reserved for the circulation of women. On the road itself, processions of penitents, mostly composed of young, indeed, very young men, followed one after the other. Stands handed out water, sweets, bread and cucumbers. The atmosphere was almost that of a carnival, despite the tears and the sounds of self-mutilation. The processions moved slowly and often stopped. The carrier of the flag, preceded by a rope held by *imambara* stewards, was followed by a small van with several people on its roof; they sang into a loudspeaker which amplified their voices. Behind them, some bare-chested devotees – despite the fact that nudity is normally forbidden – moved forward in four rows. When the singing stopped, those on the outside turned to face the inside, and those on the inside turned to face the outside, so that they were facing each other as they began to hit themselves rhythmically. This was a demonstration of courage and virility, by mostly unmarried men. Most of the people in this group were indeed young adults, but a joyful and undisciplined party of children followed behind imitating their gestures. When they stopped moving forward, an adolescent seized the opportunity to walk through the rows pouring rosewater on the penitents. When the men hit themselves, he crouched down to avoid getting hurt. Some ended up collapsing, whereupon health workers immediately took charge of them. Several people were also pounding their chests among the crowd packed on the side of the road. There were many women, but they were confined to one side of the road. Despite the solemn atmosphere, many comments could be heard: those who hit themselves most vigorously were pointed out, the different processions were compared and contrasted, people greeted one another …

The commemoration followed the various events associated with the death of Husayn, but the calendar of Muharram also reproduced

the stages of a funeral. Three, seven and fourteen days after 'Ashura', the Hazaras again marked Husayn's death in a more intimate way. Forty days later, a new ceremony of mourning took place, the *chihilom* or *chilom* (the "fortieth"). The *imambara* processions passed through Shiite neighbourhoods; again chains ripped through the air and tore the skin of the flagellants.

Muharram celebrations function as a kind of outlet for tensions and frustrations accumulated during the year. In the sermons *(rawza)*, the sufferings endured by the Hazaras were constantly compared to those endured by Husayn and his family. The thirst which tortured the Imam's companions, prevented as they were from drawing water from the Euphrates, was compared to the Taliban blockade of the Hazarajat between summer 1997 and autumn 1998. The profanation of Husayn's body was twinned with the tragic end of 'Abdul 'Ali Mazari, the Hazara leader captured and killed by the Taliban in March 1995; and, more generally, the fate of the victims of Karbala was compared to the massacres inflicted on the Hazaras (for example, the butchery of several hundred civilians in Afshar Mina, a district of Kabul, by troops allied to Massoud in January 1993, or the killings perpetrated by the Taliban in Mazar-e Sharif in August 1998).

Recent political and military events echo the mystical history of Shiism; believers are guilty of non-assistance and must atone for it. They mourn their martyrs and relive their sufferings to the point of lacerating their bodies. Self-flagellation is an act of mourning, an expression of guilt, but also of mystical identification with the martyrs. The believers suffer for the Imam Husayn, but also express that they are ready to fight for him and for a return to justice. By mortifying themselves, they expiate their sins and accelerate the coming of an era of justice. Sadness and mourning thus open up a brighter prospect because of the certainty that better tomorrows will follow. 'Ashura' is an opportunity to mourn the martyrdom of the Imam Husayn but also to declare oneself ready to avenge the death of the innocents. In the conception that many Hazaras have of the end of time, there is a pronounced dimension of revenge: the hidden Imam will return to punish the guilty and repair injustices. The world is corrupted and the faithful

must remain attentive to the signs of its destruction. Two sides of Shiism are expressed here: a calming spiritual dimension which promotes communion with the Imams, the mystic intermediaries between God and the world; and an activist tendency which calls for revolution and demands vengeance for past sufferings and injustice.

Politicisation, urbanisation and detribalisation

It is tempting to explain the modes of expression of 'Ashura' by terms such as trance or ecstasy. The descriptive and analytical pertinence of these concepts has been contested by Roberte Hamayon, however, and although she is interested in the case of shamanism her considerations have a more general application.[18] In her view, "*the shaman is only respecting the mode of conduct prescribed by his function*. He takes upon himself the role of a shaman, a role which consists in portraying his encounter with spirits".[19] Given the ritual context and the stage setting, the behaviour of the officiators resembles that of a play. It is not relevant to question their good faith or to introduce physiological or psychological considerations; in the same way as for actors, it is of no interest whether participants in the processions of Muharram are sincere or whether they are simulating. The ritualised behaviour of the flagellants of 'Ashura', like that of the shamans, unfolds under the control of the community; the roles are prescribed and refer to an entire symbolic system. The rituals have a dramatic nature: they are out of the ordinary; they differ from normal behaviour in terms of voice, gestures,

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18   In Rouget's opinion (*La musique et la transe*, Paris: Gallimard, 1980), which she quotes, the characteristics of ecstasy are "immobility, silence, solitude, without crisis, sensorial privation, memory, hallucination", those of trance are "movement, noise, society, with crisis, sensorial over-stimulation, amnesia, no hallucination", R. N. Hamayon, "Pour en finir avec la 'transe' et l''extase' dans l'étude du chamanisme", *Etudes mongoles et sibériennes* 26 (1995), 156.

19   Hamayon, *op. cit.*, 170–171.

expressions, clothing, food eaten, etc. 'Ashura' allows people to express death, suffering, political injustice, poverty, a sense of honour, group identity, guilt and a will to expiate sins, and the expectation of better days to come.

The sad fate of the Prophet's grandson alludes to the history of the Hazaras, who were excluded from power and the great empires that developed in Iran, central Asia and the Indian sub-continent after the Mughal era and the rise of the Timurid. Although they lived autonomously until their subjugation by the emir of Kabul at the end of the nineteenth century, they were later the victims of systematic economic and political exclusion. Their relationship to Shiism must be examined in this context. In the history of Afghanistan, political coalitions have rarely followed ethnic lines, while religious distinctions have always been very significant.[20] 'Abdur Rahman's conquests of the Hazarajat led to a deep conflict between Sunnis and Shiites all through the twentieth century. The long war provoked by the Communist coup and Soviet intervention widened religious and ethnic divisions, which coincided in the case of the Hazaras. Indeed, they form the only numerically important Shiite community in Afghanistan, so that, in the imagery popular among Sunni Afghans, the terms Shiites and Hazaras are interchangeable. Many negative connotations are attached to them: religious heterodoxy, political marginality, geographical isolation, cultural backwardness and poverty.

The progressive politicisation of the Hazaras has thus gone hand in hand with a strengthening of their association with Shiism. In the 1980s most Hazara political leaders constantly associated themselves with the Iranian revolution, but it was only during the following decade that the ethnic dimension became really explicit. After a period of inner divisions, most Hazaras have become part of one movement, the Hezb-e Wahdat, the goal of which is to have the rights of Hazaras recognized at national level and to ensure them a fair measure of political participation. Although most leaders of the Wahdat come from Islamic parties of Khomeinist inspiration, they have adopted a distinctly ethnicist way

20   Canfield, *op. cit.*, 1973, 4–5, 12.

of speaking. Reference to religion has not been totally abandoned, however, as we can see from the persistent claim that the Afghan state should give the same recognition to Shiism as to Sunnism.[21]
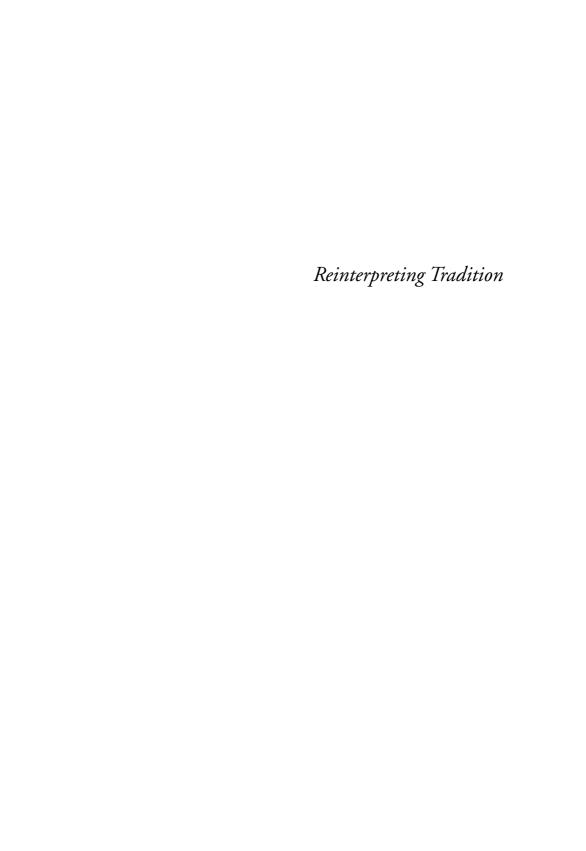
The reinforcement of identity in political speeches and its resonance among the population are the result of a social-historical process linked to past and recent conflicts. These have made an impression on people's minds and given Hazaras a whole symbolic language based on past sufferings and injustices. In the migratory urban context of Quetta, inter-community relationships are not much better. In Pakistan, as in Afghanistan, political exclusion, social injustice, poverty, insecurity and the example of the Iranian revolution are so many factors favouring the rise of a political activism that combines religious and ethnic demands. Muharram and the celebration of 'Ashura' crystallize tensions and the Hazara construction of identity. Thus in 1984, with leaders formed in Iran, the Hazaras seized the opportunity of this celebration to demonstrate on the streets of the capital of Baluchistan for greater recognition of their rights. These demonstrations ended in violent clashes with security forces. More then a dozen people were killed.

It is mostly in urban settings that the celebrations of Muharram have become important. We have been looking here at the case of Quetta, in Pakistan, but Afghan towns have passed through a similar evolution. Banned under the Taliban, the spectacular demonstrations associated with 'Ashura' have despite everything taken root in Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif (where the supposed tombstone of the Imam 'Ali, father of Husayn, may be found). They are the consequence of a certain detribalisation, which goes together with a new type of urban social relationship based more on neighbourhood than genealogy. Year after year, they are becoming more important. Although 'Ashura' is basically a religious celebration, the *ruhani* (persons with higher religious instruction) play only a secondary role. Indeed, following the approach

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21 J.-H. Grevemeyer, "Ethnicity and National Liberation: the Afghan Hazara Between Resistance and Civil War", in J.-P. Digard (ed.), *Le fait ethnique en Iran et en Afghanistan*, Paris: CNRS, 1988, 211–218; Harpviken, *op. cit.*; A. Monsutti, "Guerre et ethnicité en Afghanistan", *Tsantsa* 4 (1999), 63–73.

of the Iranian religious authorities, the main Hazara spiritual guides condemn self-torture and promote a more internalised commemoration. 'Ashura' above all provides the opportunity to affirm one's identity, acting as a vehicle for the image of self and the image of the other. References to political and military events in Afghanistan are constant. The suffering of today's victims is exalted through association with that of Imam Husayn, while the crimes of the Hazaras' enemies are compared to those of the caliph Yazid. The young bare-chested Hazaras who vaunt their courage are embodying the expectation of an entire population that its rights will finally be recognized.

The Hazaras' commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn may thus be situated within a social dynamic of migration and urbanization, followed by the emergence of new forms of sociability that go beyond genealogical or tribal relationships. It also has a symbolic dimension, which refers to the images that Hazaras have of their past, present and future. It is an expiatory ritual, but also a rite of passage – or even an initiation – which marks the differences between generations. Muharram involves a number of ritual transgressions (like the semi-nudity of the penitents) which may be read as a call to subversion. By its references to death and the orchestration of suffering, 'Ashura' represents a period on the margins of everyday life during which the creation of a *communitas* becomes possible – that is, the creation of a homogenous but temporary grouping of equal individuals operating under rules that defy the habitual social norms.[22] With its alternative conception of the visible world and of transcendence, the 'Ashura' ceremony carries a highly emotional charge that extends the feeling of solidarity beyond daily relationships between neighbours and relatives and thus permits the emergence of an imagined community. Above all, it remains for Hazaras a mourning ritual that actualises the myth of a better world to come, a celebration through which suffering and defeat are magnified and become a powerful tool for social and political mobilization.

22 V. Turner, *The Ritual Process*, Chicago: Aldine, 1969.

Reinterpreting Tradition

Nile Green

Shiism, Sufism and Sacred Space in the Deccan: Counter-Narratives of Saintly Identity in the Cult of Shah Nur

Introduction

On both an individual and community level, pilgrimage to the burial places of venerated religious figures has played an important part in the articulation of Muslim piety in each of Islam's several formal expressions, including Sunnism, Twelver Shiism and Ismaili Shiism. The shrine cults that form the focus of pilgrimage are often notable for the multiple ways in which they are interpreted by their different client communities. Indeed, this is one of the special valences of the three-dimensional world of religious space as opposed to the textual world of theological doctrine. For sacred space is by its nature open to modification and re-interpretation. Changes in ritual, the addition of new architectural or decorative features and the spoken exchange of alternative narrative traditions each provide ways in which sacred spaces can be re-interpreted by their participants. It is for this reason that sacred sites may be read as palimpsests, composed either over time or at any given moment, which hold differing accounts of the nature of the sacred power in question and the religious identity it is given.[1] In a Shiite context, this process is most noticeable outside Iran, in regions such as South

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1   M. Alam, "Competition and Co-existence: Indo-Islamic Interaction in Medieval North India", *Itinerario* 1 (1989) and J. W. Meri, *The Cult of Saints Among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Asia where Shia Islam is a minority confession.[2] South Asia has a long history of Muslim interaction with other religious groups, and Shiites too have partaken in this despite objections raised by their religious leaders. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that it is chiefly in the sphere of religious space and its associated practices that we find interfaces not only between Shiite and Sufi piety but also between Shiite, Sunni and Hindu piety.[3]

Through their promises of miracle and grace, shrine cults possess a kind of capital, however symbolic, that may be claimed by or divided among different groups of pilgrims. As with any other asset, the rights of ownership or privileged access to the powers of the cult figure are also at times a matter of dispute.[4] This theme is traced in the following pages through an exploration of Shiite claims over a Sufi saint in the Indian Deccan, in the context of the wider history of the shrine and of Shiite practice in the Deccan. After examining the interface between Sufi and Shiite piety in South Asia at large, the paper presents a case study of Shiite claims to the shrine of Shah Nur in Aurangabad in the contemporary Indian state of Maharashtra. In common with all minority communities or confessions, Shiism has often seen itself, and in turn been seen, as distinct and apart from the wider otherness of surrounding majority communities. In contrast to such perceptions, a focus on a shared sacred space may shed light on some of the ways in which Shiites have interacted as a minority community in the

2   For general studies of Shiism in South Asia, see J. N. Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, London: Luzac & Co., 1953 and S. A. A. Rizvi, *A Socio-Intellectual History of the Isnā 'Asharī Shī'īs in India*, 2 vols, Canberra: Marifat, 1986.

3   T. K. Stewart, "Surprising Bedfellows: Vaisnava and Shiite Alliance in Kava Āripha's 'Tale of Lālamon'", *International Journal of Hindu Studies* (forthcoming).

4   Shrines also often possess considerable assets of a material kind and disputes over the ownership of shrine landholdings add an economic dimension to such rivalries. See E. A. Mann, "Religion, Money and Status: Competition for Resources at the Shrine of Shah Jamal, Aligarh", in C. W. Troll (ed.), *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Deccan with a wider plurality of religious communities and their own world-views.[5]

Shiites, Sufis and Shrines

In the Shia world, the Karbala and Najaf shrine centres of the chief figures of the Shiite *Heilsgeschichte* have long been the most important pilgrimage sites outside the Hijaz. In Iran Shiites have also developed a tradition of visiting shrines built for descendants of the Imams *(imamzadas)*, a type of shrine that has increasingly dominated the Iranian landscape since the Safavid period.[6] Less recognized, however, is the practice in some Shiite communities of visiting the tombs of Sufi saints.[7] As with many other Muslim religious practices, this is a custom that has been obscured by its ambiguous position within the theoretical superstructure of Shiite theology. Correspondingly, the past four centuries have seen vigorous and sometimes bloody competition for religious authority between *mujtahids* and Sufis in Iran.[8] Nevertheless, even in

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5   For historical overviews of Shiism in the Deccan, see D.C. Bredi, "Shiism in the Deccan: A Hypothetical Study", *Islamic Culture* 62, 2–3 (1988) and O. Khalidi, "The Shias of the Deccan: An Introduction", *Hamdard Islamicus* 15/4 (1992).

6   Y. Nakash, "The Visitation of the Shrines of the Imams and the Shiite Mujtahids in the Early Twentieth Century", *Studia Islamica* 81 (1995) and S.M. Zwemer, "The Shiah Saints", *Muslim World* 22 (1932).

7   On early parallels between Shiite and Sufi pilgrimage, see C.S. Taylor, "Reevaluating the Shiite Role in the Development of Monumental Islamic Funerary Architecture: The Case of Egypt", *Muqarnas* 9 (1992).

8   K. Babayan, "Sufis, Dervishes and Mullas: the Controversy over Spiritual and Temporal Dominion in Seventeenth-Century Iran", in C. Melville (ed.), *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1996; H. Dabashi, "Historical Conditions of Persian Sufism During the Safavid Period", in L. Lewisohn (ed.), *Classical Persian Sufism: From its Origins to Rumi*, London: Khanaqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993 and A.J. Newman, "Sufism and Anti-Sufism in Safavid Iran: the Authorship of the *Hadīq al-Shī'a* Revisited", *Iran* 37 (1999).

Iran the visitation of the shrines of Sufi saints has continued to form a stratum of religious practice that complements the more prominent (and less theologically and socially ambiguous) custom of pilgrimage to *imamzadas*. From the reign of Shah 'Abbas I (1588–1629) onwards, political and religious developments in Iran increased the power of the clerical class in relation to Sufis and other competing sources of religious authority. In post-Safavid Iran persons and practices that had formally been identified with Sufism as a powerful and time-honoured branch of Muslim learning became re-identified with expressly Shiite *topoi* and institutions. In this way, classic works of Sufi theosophy were drawn into the growing discipline of Shiite gnosis *(hikmat, 'irfan)*, while Sufi orders such as the Ni'matullahiyya gave their genealogies and public rituals increasingly Shiite attributes. Amid this competition and appropriation, the tradition of Shiite-Sufi interaction has often been obscured.[9]

Despite the periodic purges of Sufi influence in Iran, the interplay of Sufi and Shiite forms of piety continued to exist as a counter-narrative to the hegemonic versions of Shiite faith and practice that were supported at different times by independent clerical institutions or the state. Over time, this led to a changing of the contours of the internal religious formulations of individual believers as well as of their external expression on a landscape dotted with shrines competing for limited clienteles. The most notable example of this process has been the contrasting fortunes of the state-sponsored shrine cults of the Sufi Safi al-Din in Ardabil and of the eighth Imam 'Ali Reza in Mashhad.[10] But, if

9 For studies of Shiite Sufi orders in nineteenth and twentieth century Iran, see M. van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes: Sufis and the State in Iran, from the Late Qajar Era to the Islamic Republic*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002 and R. Gramlich, *Die Schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1965–81. On Shiism and Sufism in the rise of the Safavids, see M.M. Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safawids: Šī'ism, Sūfism, and the Gulat*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1972.

10 C. Melville, "Shah 'Abbas and the Pilgrimage to Mashhad", in Melville (1996); A. Morton, "The Ardabil Shrine in the Reign of Shah Tahmasp I", *Iran* 12 & 13 (1974 & 1975) and K. Rizvi, "'Its Mortar Mixed with the Sweetness of Life': Architecture and Ceremonial at the Shrine of Safī al-dīn Ishāq Ardabīlī During the Reign of Shāh Tahmāsb I", *Muslim World* 90/3–4 (2000).

the history of Shiism in Iran has witnessed one side of the course of Shiite-Sufi interaction during the past four centuries, Shiite communities in parts of the Muslim world in which Shiism either lost or never possessed political dominance have at times framed different approaches to the relationship between Shiism and Sufism.

The dispatching of clerics from Najaf and later Qum to Shiite communities outside Iran and Iraq has long meant that social as well as theological developments in the Shiite heartlands have had their wider effects on Shiite communities elsewhere. Nonetheless, religious practice among the many smaller Shiite communities in various parts of Asia has at times preserved a measure of independence by articulating more or less localized versions of Shiite piety.[11] In this respect, the Shiite communities of the Deccan present an especially interesting case. Their political history offers an important contrast to that of the Shiites of Iran, with a period of political supremacy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries followed by a long era of the double minoritarianism of Sunni and later Hindu socio-political dominance. Another interesting contrast is the continued exposure of the Shiite communities of the Deccan to the widespread tradition of Sufi popular piety that has long infused the religious practice of Hindus no less than Muslims in South Asia. In the Deccan, Shiites interacted with a wider environment in which Sufi piety continued to flourish in a way that was impossible in post-Safavid Iran. And, as in the wider Muslim world, the focus for popular Sufi piety in the Deccan was the shrines of the Sufi saints.

Islam in South Asia has found one of its most durable forms of expression in the form of shrines *(dargahs)* erected around the tombs of Sufis subsequently revered as saints *(awliya)*. Given the immense popularity of these institutions, themselves in large part modelled on earlier Iranian and Central Asian prototypes, it is perhaps not surprising that

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11   On Shiite devotional life in South Asia, see D. Pinault, *Horse of Karbala: Muslim Devotional Life in India*, London: Palgrave, 2001 and V. J. Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Shiite Devotional Rituals in South Asia*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993.

they sometimes attracted the devotion of Shiites as well as Sunnis.[12] While this was often on the level of popular piety, in some cases more formal Shiite connections were forged with certain shrines. This was particularly true in the Deccan, where we have seen Shiism flourishing prior to the Mughal conquests. In the tympanum above the entrance to the mausoleum in Gulbarga of the most famous of all the Deccan Sufis, Gesu Daraz (d. 1422), the names of Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn appear in large letters. Engraved beside them is the Muslim profession of faith in its Shiite form (i.e. including the phrase *'Ali wali Allah*). The mausoleum of the Bahmani ruler Ahmad Shah Wali (r. 1422–36) in Bidar contains numerous inscriptions placing Shiite *durud* calling-blessings upon the Twelve Imams, alongside the spiritual genealogy *(shajara)* of the Iranian Sufi Ni'matullah Wali (d. 1431) and the entire text of one of his tracts.[13] In Bijapur, Shiite dedicatory inscriptions are found at the shrine of the Chishti Sufi, Amin al-din 'Ala (d. 1674).[14] Here the names of the Twelve Imams appear inscribed around a Dakani Urdu inscription carved in 1677 praying for the intercession of the saint. Such epigraphic connections between Sufi saints and Shiite Imams were similarly created in other architectural contexts in the Deccan, as in a town gateway at Ellichpur praising 'Ali in a Shiite mode while at the same time calling upon the local Sufi saint 'Abd al-Rahman Ghazi.[15] Until at least the late eighteenth century, Shiite ele-

12 S.M. Azizuddin Husain, "Sufi Cults and the Shias", in A. Taneja (ed.), *Sufi Cults and the Evolution of Medieval Indian Culture*, Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 2003. Such devotional practices often conceal fascinating ethnographic data: on popular Shiite devotional practices connecting the Twelve Imams, Sufi shrines and wish-fulfilling apples, see J.W. Frembgen, "Der Apfel der Wunscherfüllung: Notizen zum schiitischen Volksbrauchtum in Pakistan und Iran", *Münchner Beiträge zur Völkerkunde* 7 (2002).

13 G. Yazdani, *Bidar: Its History and Monuments*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995, 118–119.

14 M. Akbaruddin Siddiqi, "The Dakani Inscription on the Amin Dargah at Bijapur", *Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement)*, 1968.

15 M.Y. Quddusi, "Nawwabs of Ellichpur and their Inscriptions", *Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement)* 1975, 59–60. The Nawwabs of Ellichpur patronised several Shiite buildings, including a splendid *imambara*.

ments seem to have predominated in the cult of Mu'min 'Arif (fl. *c.*1200) at his shrine near Daulatabad, where the saint's death anniversary *('urs)* was celebrated with readings of dirges *(marsiyya)* for the suffering of the Imams. Mu'min 'Arif was himself considered to be a descendant of the eighth Imam, 'Ali Reza, though this changed over time as the saint and his cult gradually came to assume a Sunni identity.[16] While many other shrines seem to have undergone similar process of 'Sunnification' in the past century or so, the popularity of Sufi shrines among ordinary Shiite Muslims at times led to the creation of unambiguously Shiite shrines drawing on the architectural forms of the Sufi shrines with which they sought to compete.[17] One of the most notable examples is the early nineteenth-century shrine patronized by the Shiite Nawwabs of Lucknow, which was dedicated to a relic claimed to be the standard *('alam)* carried at the battle of Karbala by 'Abbas, the half-brother of Imam Husayn.[18] In Hyderabad, popular Shiite piety similarly focused on the shrine of Mawla 'Ali, a Shiite shrine incorporating all the architectural and ritual forms of the Sufi shrines of the Deccan that was built on a site where Imam 'Ali had appeared in a vision.[19] A similar vision of two horsemen, interpreted as being Imams Hasan and Husayn, led to the patronage of a shrine at the place of their appearance at Jaora by the last *nawwab* of Jaora, Muhammad Iftikhar 'Ali Khan. Known as Husayn Tekri, like the shrine of Mawla 'Ali, this pilgrimage centre took on all of the features of a Sufi shrine without actually possessing the body of a saint.

16 C. W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Centre*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, 234–235.

17 On such developments in North India, see C. Liebeskind, *Piety on its Knees: Three Sufi Traditions in South Asia in Modern Times*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, 251–260.

18 On the evolution of this shrine, see J. R. I. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shī'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722–1859*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, 97–100.

19 On this shrine, see S. A. A. Bilgrami, *Landmarks of the Deccan: A Comprehensive Guide to the Archaeological Remains of the City and Suburbs of Hyderabad*, Hyderabad: Government Central Press, 1927, 12–13.

Shiism in the Deccan

The first Muslim powers to rule the Deccan arrived there from northern India in 1296 as an extension of the Sultanate of Delhi.[20] However, the rule of the north soon dwindled and most of the Deccan came into the hands of a new Muslim power, the Bahmani Sultans (1347–1527) of Gulbarga and later Bidar. This dynasty was the first to introduce Shiism into the Deccan in any significant form. Through the Bahmani sultans' association with the descendants of the Sufi Shah Ni'matullah Wali (d. 1429), their Shiism was from early on also associated with powerful Sufi masters. Not only did Ahmad Shah Wali (r. 1422–36), the greatest of the Bahmani sultans, receive his royal investiture and title *wali* at the hands of such an immigrant Iranian Sufi, he also sent funds to eastern Iran to beautify the shrine of Shah Ni'matullah in Mahan.[21] A set of finely carved wooden doors sent by Ahmad Shah Wali remain at the shrine to this day, while Ahmad Shah's own mausoleum in Bidar contains an abundance of calligraphic wall decorations of an explicitly Shiite character that are among the finest specimens of Bahmani art to survive. The immigration of Sufis from Iran was only one part of a larger movement of educated Persians into the Deccan, none more famous than the great Bahmani vizier, Mahmud Gawan (d.1482).[22] This Persian immigrant culture, highly esteemed in court life in the Deccan, was the source of a long-running series of disputes between immigrant *(afaqi)* and local *(dakani)* factions that marked the Deccan's political history for several centuries.

20   On the political and cultural history of the Deccan, see C. W. Ernst, "Deccan", in
     Encyclopaedia Iranica and H. K Sherwani and P. M. Joshi (eds), *History of Medieval Deccan (1295–1724)*, 2 vols, Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1973–4.
21   H. K. Sherwani, *The Bahmanis of the Deccan*, Delhi: Munshiram, 1985, 133–134 &152–155.
22   J. R. I. Cole, "Iranian Culture and South Asia, 1500–1900", in N. Keddie and R. Matthee (eds), *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002 and A. Dadvar, *Iranians in Mughal Politics and Society 1606–1658*, Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1999.

The fragmentation of the Bahmani state into a number of smaller sultanates during the early sixteenth century meant that the Deccan's earlier connections with Persia continued to be of importance in the new political centres of Bijapur, Golkonda and Ahmadnagar. At different stages in their history, the rulers of each of these sultanates also espoused Shiism. As a means of balancing the growing threat of the Mughal state in North India, cultural and political ties with Safavid Iran were encouraged, even to the point of announcing the name of the Safavid ruler in the Friday sermon *(khutba).*[23] However, the success of these kingdoms was ultimately limited and they fell one by one to the armies of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. The Mughal conquests between the 1630s and 1680s caused a categorical break in the history of the Deccan. Sharply re-aligning the Deccan's cultural and political geography towards North India and Central Asia, these conquests brought with them changes in architecture, language, trade and religious practice. These changes were also notable with regard to the disenfranchisement of official Shiism and of ties with Safavid Iran that had served as one of the rallying calls of the Mughal campaign.

A Case Study: Shah Nur and the Shiites of Aurangabad

The city of Aurangabad in the western Deccan played a central role in the Mughal conquests and the cultural and religious changes that accompanied them.[24] Aurangabad had been originally founded under the name of Khirki for the Shiite Nizam Shahs of Ahmadnagar. After its re-foundation by Aurangzeb in 1681, it was to become the operational centre for the Mughals' wider conquests in the region that brought

23 D. C. Bredi, "Shiism's Political Valence in Medieval Deccani Kingdoms", in A. Dallapiccola and S. Z. Lallémant (eds), *Islam and Indian Regions*, vol. 1, Heidelberg: Franz Steiner, 1991.
24 N. Green, "Geography, Empire and Sainthood in the Eighteenth Century Muslim Deccan", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67/2 (2004).

the long Shiite ascendancy in the Deccan to a close. Like Islam as a whole, Shiism was always a minority faith in the Deccan, but a community of Shiites nonetheless remained in Aurangabad throughout the Mughal period. This community was probably in the first place a legacy of the city's earlier connections with the Nizam Shahs, but it was augmented by the inward migration of North Indian and Iranian elites and their households under the Mughals. These movements were supplemented when the leaders of the Muhammad-Shahi branch of the Ismailis migrated from Ahmadnagar during the latter part of the seventeenth century.[25]

The earlier legacy of Deccani Shiism later found social expression after the decline of Mughal power in the region. During the decades following the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, Shiites rose to renewed wealth and prominence under Aurangabad's Asaf Jah rulers (c. 1724–1948), under whom the presence of a number of prominent Shiite families at court did much to raise the profile and prestige of the Shiite community at large. This bureaucratic rise began under Nizam 'Ali Khan (1763–1803) and continued through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when four out of ten Asaf Jah *diwans* were Shiites. Contemporary with the revival of Shiism in Hyderabad under the Asaf Jahs, the last decades of the eighteenth century witnessed a revival of Shiism throughout South Asia, seen most clearly in the rise of the state of Awadh and its capital of Lucknow. This renaissance was also apparent in the Deccan, where court patronage attracted a number of Shiite scholars from Iran to Hyderabad just as the earlier courts of the Deccan had attracted Iranian immigrants. Shiite *sayyids* featured prominently in this movement of the pious and learned, including the remarkable 'Abd al-Latif Shushtari, whose *Kitab Tuhfat al-'Alam* (1802) brought news of some of the latest developments of European science to the Deccan.

Sufi groups also rose to renewed prominence in the Deccan under Mughal and Asaf Jah rule. Sufis belonging to orders that were culturally or politically aligned to the Mughal state (particularly the Chishtiyya

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25 F. Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 490.

and Naqshbandiyya) began to enter the Deccan during this period and many settled in its erstwhile capital of Aurangabad. Unlike the earlier generations of Persian immigrants, these Sufis originated for the most part in North India or Central Asia. In time a small number of them were transformed into the city's saints through the patronage of their shrines by Aurangabad's political elites. Numerous Sufi shrines were also constructed in towns in the surrounding region during the late Mughal and early Asaf Jah period, drawing on a variety of sources of patronage that included Sunni, Shiite and even Hindu patrons.[26] Nonetheless, Aurangabad made a significant contribution to Shiite religious literature, particularly the composition of dirges *(marsiyya)* in Urdu in honour of Hasan and Husayn. Several such dirges were composed by Iranian notables (that is, notables of Irani immigrant descent) resident in the city during the reign of Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah (1724–48).[27] Shiites at court in Aurangabad included Dargah Quli Khan Salar Jang, who composed dirges in Urdu on the martyrdom of Husayn, and Nawazish 'Ali Khan Shayda, who composed a *masnawi* on the Shiite passion at Karbala entitled *Rawzat al-asar* and in turn patronized other writers of *marsiyya* poetry. The *marsiyya* writers in Aurangabad also included Sayyid Hasan Zawqi and Sayyid Ashraf.

One of the new Sufi arrivals in Mughal Aurangabad was Shah Nur Hammami, who died in 1692. An extensive shrine was built for him on the outskirts of the city by the Irani notable Diyanat Khan, and by the mid-eighteenth century this seems to have become Aurangabad's principal pilgrimage centre, a position it has maintained down to the present day. The numerous devotees who currently attend his shrine refer to Shah Nur's identity in a number of contrasting ways. Some describe him in unambiguously Muslim terms as the bringer of Islam to the region and as a converter of Hindus, while many among the city's larger Sunni community regard him as an indubitably Sunni saint.

26 N. Green, "Auspicious Foundations: The Patronage of Sufi Institutions in the Late Mughal and Early Asaf Jah Deccan", *South Asian Studies* 20 (2004).

27 More generally, see S. A. A. Rizvi, "Shi'ite Religious Literature in the Deccan", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 64 (1990).

But for other devotees, both Hindu and Muslim, he is primarily a holy man *(pir, baba)* noted more for his benevolence and miracle-working than for any specific religious affiliation. Among the various identities ascribed to the saint, Shah Nur is considered by many contemporary Shiites of Aurangabad as having been a specifically Shiite Sufi. At the same time, the low-caste Hindus who visit Shah Nur's shrine in large numbers also contribute to the saint's multiple personality by describing him after the image of a Hindu sadhu. In this way, the identity of the premier saintly patron of Aurangabad's Shiites is contested by members of the other communities making up the shrine's diverse clientele.

The fact that Shah Nur left no writings of his own was a significant factor that left room for the multiple identities claimed for him. Indeed, his own minimal contribution to his various cultic identities has allowed him to function as a kind of saintly *tabula rasa* onto which a range of identities can be inscribed. These differences are clearly seen in hagiographic works written over the past two and a half centuries, lending a historical dimension to modern-day disputes over Shah Nur's identity. By viewing them in the light of the wider history of Shah Nur's shrine, we may see how the contemporary Shiite connection to Shah Nur fits into a broader pattern of shifting versions of the saint's identity.

Like the shrine of the earlier 'Shiite' Sufi Shah Khalilullah in Bidar, and like a number of shrine cults in the city of Hyderabad where the Shiite community is more numerous, the cult of Shah Nur tends to the needs of a minority community of Shiites whose faith and religious practice have evolved in an environment in which the cult of the Sufi saints looms large. Given the earlier history of Shiite political dominance in the Deccan, some of Aurangabad's Shiites relate their tradition of saint veneration as part of a wider counter-narrative of the Deccan's history as a whole. This version of the region's history claims that Islam first came to the Deccan with the armies of the Delhi Sultans in its Shiite rather than its Sunni form. Drawing on the famous saintly traditions of nearby Khuldabad, this envisioning of the Deccan's past also claims that the thousand and four hundred strong legion of saints that is traditionally claimed to have followed the armies of the Delhi Sultans to the Deccan was composed exclusively of Shiite Sufis,

who were subsequently responsible for spreading Islam in region. By extension, many of Aurangabad's Shiites believe that the great Muslim saints of the Deccan – including Gesu Daraz (d. 1422) at Gulbarga and Burhan al-din Gharib (d. 1337) at Khuldabad – were Shiite saints whose true religious identity has been obscured over time with the rise of Sunni Islam in the region. While this tradition does contain elements of factual historicity, it is also valuable in its own right as the self-history of a minority community attempting to re-claim what it perceives to be its own stolen history. Of no less interest is the comparison it affords with Shiite self-perceptions elsewhere through its acknowledgement of the long tradition of Shiite-Sufi interaction.

The textual tradition surrounding Shah Nur presents a rather contrasting picture to the Shiite saint of oral tradition. The first description of Shah Nur's early life is found in the *Ma'asir al-umara* of Shah Nawaz Khan (d. 1758), the famous prosopography of Mughal notables written in Aurangabad in the decades following Shah Nur's death.[28] The *Ma'asir al-umara* describes Shah Nur as originally coming from north-east India.[29] While disputed by later hagiographers, such a provenance seems to fit with the origins in the Lucknow region of the lineage of spiritual heirs of the saint or *sajjada nashins* who succeeded Shah Nur at his shrine after he died without issue. However, the account in the *Ma'asir al-umara* is also of interest for its claim that Shah Nur did not belong to any specific Sufi order *(tariqa)* and that his Sufi lineage *(silsila)* only sprang up upon his death. From this account it therefore appears that Shah Nur belonged to the tradition of wandering holy men to be found in many religions, no less important in Islam despite its sidelining in the literary traditions fostered by the Sufi brotherhoods and their representatives.

It would seem that, during this early period, Shah Nur was singled out more for his personal charisma than for any of the claims to pious learning or familial descent that would develop in the decades and cen-

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28 Shah Nur appears in the notice on his patron Diyanat Khan in Shah Nawaz Khan, *Ma'āthir al-umarā*, Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1911–52, 475–483.

29 The place-name used is Purab, a term referring vaguely to the regions lying to the east of the Ganges between Kanpur and Bihar.

turies after this death. Rather more is known about Shah Nur's patron in Aurangabad, Diyanat Khan, than about Shah Nur himself.[30] This patron was an important member of the Mughal service class in Aurangabad who at one point filled the office of *diwan* of the city.[31] As *biyutat* of Aurangabad, Diyanat Khan was also responsible for all public building projects in the city, a useful office for someone interested in patronizing the shrine of a saint. He was later buried in a courtyard of his own at the shrine he built for Shah Nur.

Although Shah Nur is today regarded by many Shiites in Aurangabad as their own community patron, he owed his elevation from holy man to saint – the process of sacralization largely dependent upon the architectural creation of a shrine as a cult centre – to a senior representative of the very Mughal forces that had put an end to Shiite power in the Deccan. In this way, his shrine belongs to the same tradition as those of Shah Musafir (d. 1714) and Nizam al-Din Aurangabadi (d.1729) in Aurangabad, which were similarly built by members of the Mughal elite classes in honour of Sufis who, like Shah Nur, had migrated to the Deccan from the older Mughal territories of the north. Yet the matter is not so straightforwardly one of Sunni conquest and Shiite marginalization. For, as well as being a member of the Mughal administrative elite, Shah Nur's patron also belonged to the Irani immigrant community in Aurangabad and was probably its senior representative. Diyanat Khan lived in the same quarter *(mohalla)* of Aurangabad as that in which he built Shah Nur's shrine, and from what is known of the organization of residential quarters in Aurangabad and other Mughal cities during this period this may suggest that Diyanat Khan's quarter formed part of the city's Irani district. Thus, although the origins of Shah Nur's cult seem to indicate little connection with Shiism as such, his close association with Diyanat Khan does point to an early connection with Aurangabad's

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30 Shah Nawaz Khan (1911–52), 475–83. Diyanat Khan is also mentioned by several other sources of the period, including the historian Khafi Khan.

31 His father, also known as Diyanat Khan, had been *diwan* of the entire Deccan. Later tradition would confuse the two, and indeed it is not entirely clear whether both father and son were associated with Shah Nur.

Irani community, of which the Shiite community was largely a sub-division.

Despite his connection to Iranis in the city, Shah Nur's Shiite associations in the oral tradition are scarcely borne out elsewhere in the early documentation on the shrine's history. The next literary record we have of Shah Nur depicts him already being transformed from a wandering holy man into the image of a Muslim saint. Forming a long section of the *Bahar u Khazan* of Baha al-din Hasan 'Uruj (d. *c*.1814), this extensive hagiographical notice was probably written during the 1770s or 1780s and is preserved in an Urdu translation made in Aurangabad in the early twentieth century by Zahur Khan Zahur.[32] In 'Uruj's description of the life and miraculous deeds of Shah Nur we find echoes of the saint's Shiite connections. At the outset, Shah Nur is described as being the son of Sayyid 'Abd Allah ibn Abu 'Ala' Hamadani and as a Husayni *sayyid*, that is, a descendant of the grandson of Muhammad and third Shiite Imam, Husayn. While this is by no means a uniquely Shiite identification, it places Shah Nur in a shared realm of Shiite-Sunni veneration for *sayyids* that echoes the Shiite veneration of tombs of descendants of the Imams and closely reflects the eighteenth-century identification of Mu'min 'Arif outside Aurangabad as a descendant of the Imams. 'Uruj's biography contains further signs of variance from other accounts of the saint's identity and, in flat contradiction of the earlier account of the *Ma'asir al-umara*, it describes Shah Nur's place of origin as Baghdad rather than northern India. Later in the account, Shah Nur is also made to utter Shiite oaths in reference to Husayn, such as 'by the praise of Shah Mazlum'. While these references are by no means evidence of a distinctly Shiite persona, they do reflect the common symbolic field which Sufi and Shiite piety occupied in the Deccan and are the clearest parallel in the textual tradition to the oral

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32 *Nūr al-Anwār*, being an Urdu translation of the sections of *Bahār u Khizān* of Bahā' al-dīn Hasan 'Urūj related to Shāh Nūr, by Zahūr Khān Zahūr (ms, Collection of Mohammad Abd al-Hayy, Aurangabad). 'Uruj was also known as a writer of manuals of epistolary form and as the compiler of an anthology of the Deccan's poets.

tradition cherished by the saint's Shiite devotees. Shah Nur's Husayni *sayyid* identity and connections with an Irani (and possibly Shiite) Mughal elite were echoed at a contemporary shrine at Georai to the east of Aurangabad dedicated to the Sufi saint Sayyid Achpal Husayni (*fl.* 1693), who appears to have been a Husayni *sayyid* from a family originating in the hinterlands of Najaf.[33]

Nonetheless, in a comprehensive guide to the Sufi shrines of the Aurangabad region composed by Khaksar-e-Sabzawari in the 1780s, there is no mention at all of Shah Nur's Husayni *sayyid* ancestry;[34] Shah Nur is simply described as a great dervish enamoured of ascetic breath control *(habs-e dam)* and beloved by all classes in the city. Yet, in presenting Shah Nur as a 'free saint' allied to no particular community by initiation or birth, Sabzawari gave him the kind of opaque identity appropriate to a cult which he described as gathering together "the whole city, from the learned to the people of the bazaar and the craftsmen". Shah Nur's fame and power were in this way attributed to his own mastery of mystical and ascetic exercises rather than to his spiritual or genealogical lineage.

Sabzawari's account, however, by no means excludes the possibility that a Shiite version of Shah Nur's identity already existed alongside other versions in the eighteenth century. This possibility is suggested by the tradition that Shah Nur's shrine became a place of burial for prominent Shiite notables in Aurangabad during the eighteenth-century Shiite renaissance under the Asaf Jahs. During this period a number of large and elaborate tomb enclosures were built around Shah Nur's shrine that oral tradition ascribes to members of the Salar Jang family, one of the foremost Shiite families at the Asaf Jah court, and other prominent Shiite families. The Salar Jang family was indeed based in Aurangabad before it followed the court to Hyderabad, where it grew in time to become the most powerful of all the Shiite aristocratic families in court

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33   See S. S. Hussein, "Some New Mughal Inscriptions from Bhir District in Maharashtra", *Epigraphia Indica (Arabic and Persian Supplement)* 1977, 97–98.

34   Khāksār Sabzawārī, *Sawānih*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Curzon Collection, ms 85.

service; the early twentieth-century Deccani historian 'Abd al-Jabbar Khan Malkapuri confirms the close association of Quli Khan Salar Jang with Shah Nur's eighteenth-century followers.[35] We also know from the *Ma'asir al-umara* of other notables buried at the shrine during the early Asaf Jah period.[36]

Despite the spate of literary and architectural activity in Aurangabad during much of the eighteenth century, the move of the Asaf Jah court to Hyderabad led to a gradual social and economic decline. In keeping with the city's own fortunes, the early years of the nineteenth century seem to have witnessed the effective abandonment of the shrine of Shah Nur once the original line of *sajjada nashins* had died out. The shrine would remain in this state for much of the rest of the century, bereft of both a lineage of *sajjada nashins* to maintain it and a class of patrons who might in turn support them. Although there are no nineteenth-century sources on Shah Nur's shrine, we are fortunate to possess a text from the middle of the century describing the practice of Islam in the Deccan.[37] The well-known *Qanoon-e-Islam* or *Customs of the Mussulmans of India* was written by Ja'far Sharif ('Jaffur Shurreef'), who was originally an inhabitant of Ellora, a village to the south of Aurangabad newly under British control.[38] The *Qanoon-e-Islam* is justly famous for its descriptions of the wealth of Muslim ritual and devotional customs in the nineteenth-century Deccan, but its main value for our present purpose is its evidence of the integration of nominally Shiite customs into the ritual life of the Deccan's inhabitants and the affiliation of these customs with a wider body of Sufi devotional practices. Ja'far Sharif describes, for example, the processions of Muharram that were until

35 'Abd al- Jabbār Khān Malkāpūrī, *Tazkira-ye-Awliyā-ye-Dakan*, Hyderabad: Hasan Press, 1331/1912–13, 1106. The current *sajjada nashin* of Shah Nur is the source for the tombs' identification.

36 Shah Nawaz Khan (1911–52), 25 & 226.

37 Jaffur Shureef, *Qanoon-e-Islam or the Customs of the Mussulmans of India comprising a full and exact account of their various rites and ceremonies from the moment of birth til the hour of death*, trans. G. A. Herklots, Madras: J. Higginbotham, 1863.

38 Ja'far Sharif wrote his classic work of colonial ethnography under the employ of the colonial servant, G. A. Herklots, who translated it into English.

quite recently enjoyed by Shiites, Sunnis and Hindus alike throughout the Deccan.[39] The imagery of the Muharram ritual paraphernalia filtered through to find a variety of other expressions in the Deccan's cultural life: most notably, the famous Char Minar building in Hyderabad, whose design is often perceived as based upon the *ta'aziyas*, the symbolic representations of the coffin of Husayn carried through the streets during the processions of 'Ashura'. Similarly, battle standards (*'alams*) carried in memory of the partisans of 'Ali at Karbala also found fresh employment as markers of commemorative sites (*astanas*) associated with Muslim saints of all kinds.[40] Battle standards seized by British soldiers from the armies of Tipu Sultan (d. 1799) in the southern Deccan similarly confirm this melange, as clearly Shiite inscriptions appear on them beside long lists of Sufis invoked for their powers of protection.[41]

With its long history in the Deccan, the imagery and forms of Shiite piety seeped into other modes of religious expression and popular celebration. Four centuries earlier the great Sufi of Gulbarga Gesu Daraz had popularised *marsiyya* recitations in the Sufi *khanaqas* of the Deccan and Sufi shrines maintained their connections with Shiite religiosity, either through the patronage of Shiite notables or through the celebration of Muharram within the shrines themselves.[42] During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries 'Ashura' processions acted as magnets for popular and syncretic religious expression, including the boys' custom of painting themselves in the form of tigers and wandering fiercely among the crowds. What is significant here is not so much that unassailably Shiite rituals and symbols were borrowed by other communities, but rather that rituals and symbols often considered to be essentially Shiite were drawn in practice from a wider ritual and sym-

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39 Shurreef (1863), 98–148.

40 Painting of such sites from seventeenth century Bijapur and eighteenth century Awadh appear in A. Topsfield, *Indian Paintings from Oxford Collections*, Oxford: Ashmolean Museum and Bodleian Library, 1994, 30–31 and 64–65.

41 T.G. Bailey, "Two Indian Standards of the Eighteenth Century", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 2/3 (1922).

42 Rizvi, op. cit.: 2, 334–346.

bolic vocabulary common to the inhabitants of the region in general. This Deccani picture has echoes in other parts of India, where several Hindu communities maintain traditions of staging their own Muharram performances, while in Punjab the small Hindu community of Husayni Brahmins actually consider themselves to be descendants of Imam Husayn.[43] Ja'far Sharif's nineteenth-century picture of a shared symbolic vocabulary therefore helps us better to understand the place of Shah Nur in the Deccan's religious life. It suggests that the engagement of Shiism as both a symbolic system and a community in the cult of Shah Nur was part of a much more general picture of shared ritual and social space. For, at the level of popular practice, Islam in the Deccan was often infused with the language and symbolism of Shiism.

With the rise of modernist Muslim reform movements, shared cults such as that of Shah Nur have increasingly come under attack since the nineteenth century.[44] Against the background of the political revival of Shiism in Lucknow and to a lesser degree Hyderabad, one of these developments was a sharper focus on the unambiguously Sunni characteristics of the great figures of Indo-Islamic tradition. When the cult of Shah Nur was re-awoken early in the twentieth century through the work of Shams al-din Chishti (d. 1928) of Hyderabad, the revived hagiographical tradition in which Shah Nur was for the first time described in print in a vernacular language also saw him depicted him in exclusively and unambiguously Sunni terms. In the Urdu *Barakat al-awliya'* (1903–4) of Imam al-din Naqvi, Shah Nur appears as a descendant of 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani (d. 1166), the great early Sufi of Baghdad whose death-anniversary was an official holiday in Hyderabad State.[45] Whereas the earliest description of Shah Nur in the *Ma'asir al-umara* had

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43 See Y. S. Sikand, *Crossing the Border: Shared Hindu-Muslim Traditions*, Bangalore: Himayat, 2001, 31–33.

44 See M. Gaborieau, "A Nineteenth-Century Indian Wahabi Tract Against the Cult of Muslim Saints: *Al-Balagh al-Mubin*", in Troll (1989) and B. D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

45 Sayyid Imām al-dīn Naqvī Hanafī Gulshanābādī, *Tazkira-ye-buzurgān-e-Dakan – Barakāt al-awliyā* n.p., 1321/1903-4, 128.

made no reference to his belonging to any specific Sufi lineage, and indeed had claimed that Shah Nur dismissed such matters as of no relevance, in the *Barakat al-awliya'* by contrast the saint is also described as being a Qadiri Sufi himself. There was little time for miracles, however, since in Naqvi's flat portrait Shah Nur "was always busy in prayer and learning". In the most famous of the twentieth-century collective hagiographies of the Deccan saints, 'Abd al-Jabbar Malkapuri repeated 'Uruj's claim that Shah Nur was the son of Sayyid 'Abd Allah ibn Abu 'Ala' Hamadani, but refrained from mentioning that this was a Husayni *sayyid* lineage.[46] Shah Nur's life-story was also brought into closer harmony with Aurangabad's Mughal legacy and with Aurangzeb in particular. Indo-Muslim tradition has long honoured Aurangzeb as the epitome of the pious sultan and as the saviour of Sunni Islam. As described by Malkapuri, the saintly life of Shah Nur was seen almost entirely through the prism of his interaction with members of the royal court and administration in the city, particularly the Sunni *qazi* of Aurangabad, Muhammad Ikram.[47]

By the time that Tara Sahib Qureshi composed the hagiographical *Aftab-e-Dakan* in the 1980s, Shah Nur's new narrative associations with Qadiri Sufism and Mughal royalty had reached their peak.[48] In Qureshi's account, the claim of Shah Nur's descent from 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani was bolstered through a genealogy in which the saint appeared as a thirteenth-generation descendant of 'Abd al-Qadir. In this genealogy, the great saint of Baghdad 'Abd al-Qadir may be seen as a powerful Sunni parallel to any claim for Shah Nur's descent from Imam Husayn. Yet *Aftab-e-Dakan* is also noteworthy for a narrative in which Shah Nur performs the miracle for Aurangzeb of dispelling a cholera epidemic among the Mughal armies conquering the Deccan.[49] It is per-

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46 Malkāpūrī (1331/1912–13), 1101–1113.
47 Muhammad Ikram is also mentioned as *qazi* of Aurangabad in the *Ma'āsir-e-'Ālamgīrī*. See Saqi Must'ad Khan, *Ma'āsir-i-'Ālamgīrī*, trans. J.N. Sarkar, Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 146, 239, 241.
48 T.S. Qurēshī, *Āftāb-e Dakan*, Aurangabad: n.p., c. 1985.
49 *Ibid.*, 11.

haps ironic that, through this narrative, this saint of the Aurangabad Shiites should implicitly become an active player in the conquest of the Deccan's Shiite kingdoms. The text also shows the influence of the reformist Barelwi theological movement.[50] It begins with a summary of the doctrine of the Light of Muhammad *(nur-e-muhammadi)*, before going on to paint Shah Nur in classic Barelwi mould as a perfect exemplar of Muhammad-centred devotion and a keen reader of the *Qasida Burda Sharif* of al-Busiri (d. 1294).[51] In *Aftab-e-Dakan*, there are no signs of any Shiite associations whatsoever, but rather the image of a Sufi resembling a product of the school at Bareilly.

The proliferation of reformist Sunni madrasas throughout South Asia in the second half of the twentieth century and their keen interest in the abolition or reform of shrine cults also had an impact on the shrine of Shah Nur. A *madrasa* affiliated to the Barelwi movement was established in one of the shrine's outbuildings in 1973 – a location that reflected a narrowing of the saint's cultic identity, since the building in question seems earlier to have functioned as a lodge for visiting Hindu pilgrims. Despite these attempts to divorce Shah Nur from his Hindu as well as his Shiite associations, both Shiite and Hindu symbolism continued to register in the saint's oral tradition beyond the confines of the Shiite and Hindu communities themselves. One such narrative described the coming to the shrine earlier in the century of a stranger who later became the saint's most noted devotee. Oral tradition recounts that during the 'Ashura' processions in his home town the stranger was surprised to encounter one of the processional standard-bearers in a state of religious ecstasy. The stranger spoke to him and was told that, although both the standard *('alam)* and the ecstasy appeared to be in the name of Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn, their bounty *(fayz)* truly came from Shah Nur. On hearing this, the man left his home-town to search for Shah Nur's shrine and eventually arrived in Aurangabad and

50   On this movement, see U. Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and His Movement, 1870–1920*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.

51   Qurēshī (c. 1985), 7–8.

came to reside at the shrine.[52] While connecting Shah Nur to the processions of Muharram, this story resembles other saintly competition narratives in its sectarian undertones; it posits Shah Nur as a more influential religious figure than the Shiite Imams. Similarly, another oral tradition connected to the shrine claims that, although Shah Nur's Irani patron Diyanat Khan was a Shiite, Shah Nur was a resolute Sunni whose proselytism in the Deccan succeeded in converting Diyanat Khan to Sunnism.[53] What is interesting about such narratives is that they invert Shiite claims to the saint not so much by denying Shiite associations with the shrine outright as by making the saint actually draw his followers away from Shiism and its festivities.

Conclusions

As a saint associated with more than one devotional community, Shah Nur is far from being the only Muslim cult figure to possess such a multi-layered identity. However, with its long Shiite history the Deccan is particularly rich in shrine traditions that incorporate Shiite elements alongside those of other religious groups. At the shrine of Shah Khalilullah at Bidar, the early Shiite associations of the saint have over time overlapped with his links to the Lingayat community, which venerate him according to its own customs in rituals led by its chief priest *(jangam)*.[54] The Shiite dimensions of Shah Nur's cult also invite comparison with the conflicting narratives connected to the shrines of Sadr al-din (d. between 1369 and 1416) and Kabir al-din (d. between 1449 and 1490–1) in Multan and Uchch in Pakistan. Many devotees identify these saints as being a Twelver Shiite and a Suhrawardi Sufi respectively. Ismaili Muslims, however, regard them both as having been Ismaili

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52 Interview, Wajid Ali, *khadim* of Shah Nur, Aurangabad, 22nd January 2000.
53 Recounted by the *sajjada nashin* of Shah Nur, 11th September 2002.
54 Yazdani, op. cit., 116.

missionaries.[55] Similar processes have occurred in relation to the shrine cult of Ramdev Pir in Rajasthan.[56] Whatever the historical accuracy of such claims, what is perhaps more interesting is the co-existence and sometimes conflict of these different versions of a saint's identity.

Like the Muharram processions, which until recently were a source of delight and festivity for Shiites, Sunnis and Hindus alike, the cult of Shah Nur reflects the fact that Shiism long interacted with a wider cultural and religious environment in the Deccan, while maintaining an association with a courtly Shiite elite. This reminds us that strict differentiation between Sunnism and Shiism, and indeed between versions of Islam and Hinduism, has often belonged more to the textual world of doctrine than to the tangible domain of religious practice. The sharpening of Shah Nur's textual identity in the twentieth century, from a freewheeling ascetic dervish and Husayni *sayyid* to a bookish Sunni descendant of 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani, was also in part a reflection of the sharp distinctions of doctrine, community and praxis that are complicit with the spread of modernity. For, as in other religious contexts in South Asia, the cult of Shah Nur witnessed the increasing domination of textual print culture and its doctrinal orthodoxies over the less formal domains of oral tradition and customary practice.

From the Bahmani period onwards, Islam in the Deccan was always tinged with a layering of Shiism, especially in its more popular forms. In this way, popular Islam reflects the very different historical trajectory of Shiism in the Deccan in comparison with Iran. With his large shrine as an attraction to those in need among each of the city's communities, Shah Nur personifies the interaction of those communities and the interfusion of their religious symbols that constituted Deccan society. When seen alongside the claims of Aurangabad's Sunni and Hindu communities over Shah Nur, this gives us some insight into how the shrines of Sufi saints have formed spaces in which minority Shiites could partake in the wider religious world of their surround-

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55 Daftary, op. cit., 479–80.
56 D. Sila Khan, *Conversions and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis in Rajasthan*, Delhi: Manohar, 2003.

ings. Complementing other Shiite religious spaces such as *imambaras* or *'ashurkhanas*, the Shiite counter-narratives of Shah Nur's identity could hope to appropriate a saintly shrine of unrivalled local power.

Gabrielle van den Berg

The 'Sura of the Gift' in the Oral Tradition of the Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan[1]

The Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan

The area of Badakhshan is situated on both sides of the ancient river Oxus, in the high mountains of the Pamirs. Today this region covers both northeast Afghanistan and southeast Tajikistan, and so one may speak of Afghan Badakhshan and Tajik Badakhshan. In the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan, the area of Badakhshan has a special status: it is officially known as the Autonomous Region of Mountain Badakhshan, often abbreviated to the Russian designation GBAO.

The inhabitants of Tajik Badakhshan regard themselves as a separate group within Tajikistan, although they were has never been listed as a separate ethnicity in the days of the Soviet Union. They refer to themselves, and are known throughout Tajikistan, as either Pamiri or Badakhshani. A large part of the Pamiris lives outside Badakhshan,[2] mainly in the Tajik capital Dushanbe and in the southern areas of Tajikistan. Only the river valleys of Badakhshan are cultivated; otherwise the area is sparsely populated and hard to reach. The inaccessibility of Badakhshan has led to the preservation and development of various languages, rites and customs that are not found elsewhere in Central Asia.

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1 This article is based on material collected during fieldwork in 1992–3. Parts of the material in this article have been published in G. van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry of the Pamir Mountains: A Study on the Songs and Poems of the Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan*, Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004.

2 As this article deals only with Tajik Badakhshan, the term 'Badakhshan' refers to Tajik Badakhshan throughout the article.

Pamiris living outside Badakhshan usually maintain the use of their own language. In Badakhshan a variety of languages is spoken, all belonging to the eastern Iranian language group of Pamir languages, with the exception of the Turkic language of the Kirghiz minority on the plains of northern Badakhshan, who are not known as Pamiris. It is not only language but also religion which sets the Pamiri people apart from the other inhabitants of Tajikistan and indeed Central Asia at large. The Pamiris are adherents of the Nizari Ismailiyya, one of the Shiite minorities within Islam. The Nizari Ismailis believe in the rule of an unbroken line of imams from 'Ali, the son-in-law and cousin of the Prophet Muhammad, to the present-day 49th imam, Shah Karim al-Husayni, who was born in 1936. He is also known as the 4th Agha Khan.

The Ismaili religion of the Pamiri community has developed in relative isolation, far from the Ismaili centres of authority – in as far as one can speak of 'centres of authority', given that the Ismailis have been prey to persecution throughout their history. It is probably not without reason that the Ismailis of Badakhshan chose to live in this remote area more than ten centuries ago.[3]

Contacts among the dispersed groups of Ismailis may have been scarce before the twentieth century, but when the area of Tajik Badakhshan become part of the Soviet Union in the first quarter of the twentieth century the Pamiri Ismailis grew even more isolated from their fellow-believers. The border between Afghan and Tajik Badakhshan was closed, and the practice of religion was hampered in the Tajik part of Badakhshan. Many Ismailis from Badakhshan moved to other places in Tajikistan, where they formed a minority among the largely Sunni Tajiks. For people living in urban areas in particular, and to a lesser extent for those remaining in the rural areas of Badakhshan, religion gradually receded in importance. Certain traditions never disappeared, however, and interest in the Ismaili religion increased hugely during the religious revival in the latter years of the Soviet Union. The restoration of contact with other Ismailis and with the Agha Khan led to the Agha Khan's visit to the area in 1995.

3   W. Ivanow, *Problems in Nasir-i Khusraw's Biography*, Bombay, 1956, 45–46.

The tradition of *maddahkhani*

The prolonged isolation of the Ismaili community of Badakhshan appears to have influenced their faith: the Pamiri Ismailis cherish a number of traditions that are peculiar to their community. One of these is the performance of religious poetry as an Ismaili ritual on a variety of occasions, most importantly following the death of a community member, but also on Thursday evenings and at the annual feasts near one of the numerous holy graves *(mazar)* of Badakhshan. The tradition of performing religious poetry is called *maddah* or *maddahkhani*. The singers of *maddah* are called *maddahkhan*s. Usually they are non-professional musicians, who perform on request and serve a small community, either a village or a town quarter. Badakhshan has only one major town, the capital Khorugh, which has approximately 20,000 inhabitants (1992).

The Badakhshanis have a high regard for *maddahkhani* as a religiously inspired community service with an honorific character; it is not to be considered a paid job. Many *maddahkhans* earn their living as farmers: farming is the most common form of employment in the villages of Badakhshan. A number of professional musicians sing *maddah* alongside their other work. But *maddahkhani* is seen as a separate activity, for which no payment should be required. A few *maddahkhans* have become famous throughout Badakhshan; occasionally they perform on local television.

Maddah literally means 'praise', and accordingly *maddahkhani* means 'the singing of praise', while a *maddahkhan* is a 'singer of praise'. However, *maddah* does not only involve praise. It may be described as a long string of poems linked together in a distinctive musical performance. A *maddahkhan* sings the poetry while accompanying himself on the *robab*, a kind of lute specific to the region. Sometimes other stringed instruments are used, such as the *tanbur*. The *maddahkhan* may be accompanied by another *maddahkhan* or by a tambourine player.

Maddahkhani takes place in a private house, preferably a traditional Pamiri one where the central space is divided into separate but inter-

connected sections marked by the *panj sitan*, the five pillars supporting the roof. Each of the pillars is dedicated to one of the five members of the Prophet's family: Muhammad himself, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn. They are referred to as *panj tan-e pak* (five pure beings) and often play a role in the texts sung within *maddahkhani*. The *maddahkhan* sits between the pillars on a dais, together with his audience. No special preparation is required before a performance of *maddahkhani*, but *maddahkhans* stress the importance of wearing a *taqi*, the traditional headwear, so as not to be bareheaded. The performance is usually attended by the extended family and members of the village community. Men and young boys normally sit near the *maddahkhan*, while women and children are present in the background; they move around, while those seated near the *maddahkhan* usually remain so until the end. As part of the village community, a *khalife* may be present during the performance of *maddah*. A *khalife* is a mullah who has been chosen to represent the Ismaili community of a certain village or group of villages; his status is more official than that of the mullah. When *maddahkhani* is performed as a funeral rite, the *khalife* plays an active part by commenting on the contents of the *maddah* and by reciting a fixed set of prayers appropriate to the occasion.

The poetry sung in *maddah* is almost exclusively in Persian, which may be defined as the ritual language of the Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan. Persian has long been the lingua franca in this area, although its importance decreased in Soviet times in favour of Russian. Today, almost all Pamiris are bilingual and speak (Tajik) Persian or Russian in addition to their native language. Although *maddahkhani* may be regarded as an oral tradition, the poetry sung in *maddah* is derived from or based upon classical Persian poetry, which is usually seen as a written tradition. Well-known pen names of Persian poets may be heard in the poems: for example, Jalal al-Din Rumi or Naser-e Khosrow.

Maddah is performed in cycles: a cycle typically starts with an introductory *ghazal*, followed by a longer text such as a *qaside* or a *hekayat*. Quatrains and short prayers are inserted between the longer poems. A performance of *maddah* may consist of a number of cycles and last for several hours.

The main themes of the poetry in *maddah* are mystical love and praise of the major figures in Badakhshani Ismailism. The praise focuses on 'Ali and the holy family of the Prophet Muhammad, on the present Agha Khan and on Naser-e Khosrow, the *pir* (spiritual guide) of the Badakhshani Ismailis. The poet-philosopher Naser-e Khosrow is worshipped by the Ismailis of Badakhshan as the missionary who brought them the Ismaili faith in the 11th century A.D.

Local tradition has many legends about this holy man, and the places he is said to have visited have become places of worship. The Ismailis of Badakhshan claim to have been fire-worshippers until Naser-e Khosrow came on *da'va* (mission) to the eastern part of the Islamic world around 1050 on behalf of the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir bi-llah. Naser-e Khosrow himself came originally from Central Asia and died around 1075 A.D. in Yumgan, now in Afghan Badakhshan. This town is a place of pilgrimage for the Ismailis of Badakhshan, although at present they have few opportunities to go there.

A local legend involving Naser-e Khosrow and *maddahkhani*

A collection of stories about Naser-e Khosrow in Badakhshan called *Bahr-ol-akhbar* was published in Tajik Badakhshan in 1992. Its author appears to be Sayyid Jalal Monji. The book is based on an untitled manuscript found in Badakhshan. One of the stories gives us an insight into how the tradition of *maddah* was perceived as a religious practice. We hear how a wealthy king is converted to Ismailism and becomes a poet and *maddahkhan*; he sings praise of 'Ali accompanying himself on his *robab*, in the same way that contemporary *maddahkhans* do. The story has the following title: "On King Jahanshah, who took leave from ruling and entered the service of the *pir* [i.e. Naser-e Khosrow], whereupon the holy pir gave him the name of 'Umar-e Yomgi and bestowed on him the position of Sheikh."

The story tells of how the sister of King Jahanshah of Badakhshan was suffering from paralysis until the *pir* Naser-e Khosrow saved her. A few months later, rumours of her being pregnant caused her disgrace. The king was led to believe that the *pir* was to blame, and he rode off in fury to seek vengeance. But, as he crossed the bridge in front of the encampment of the *pir*, the bridge turned upside down and the king was suspended between the bridge and the water, together with his horse. Blood and bile poured from his nose and his mouth until he was clean inside. Eventually a quantity of bile formed a large stone, which could be seen when the water was low. The king repented and promised to abdicate and enter the service of the *pir* for the rest of his life. The *pir* agreed to this and ordered that the king's horse should be eaten. The servant of the *pir*, Divane Ahmad, broke the wooden part of the horse's saddle into pieces: one part became a *robab* and the other part a plane-tree. In the story this is related in the following manner:

> And the *pir* gave the *robab* to King Jahanshah and said: 'Sing praises'. And he started to sing with his eyes closed. He began:
>> My tongue sings the praise of 'Ali
>> My two lips do not stop singing 'Oh 'Ali'
>> My head has bent down for the beloved
>> My thirty-two teeth sing 'Ali.
>
> Divane Ahmad put two pieces of wood from the saddle under the cooking-pot and with one blow the meat was done. King Jahanshah sang seventy praises with all his heart and all the people came to see this and the meat was divided between them. And the holy *pir* took the lamp and lit it and began the commemoration and the rosary.[4]

This story is one of the legends about Naser-e Khosrow that are still popular in Badakhshan. King Jahanshah later became known as the poet 'Umar-e Yomgi. This name still appears in the poetry sung in *maddah*: 'Umar-e Yomgi is said to be the author of a praise poem on Naser-e Khosrow.

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4   S. Monji, *Bahr-ol-akhbar*, Khorugh, 1992, 33.

The 'Sura of the Gift' in two examples of *maddah*

The praise sung by King Jahanshah in the above story forms the first verses of a well-known *qaside* in Badakhshan expressing the presence of 'Ali in the whole of creation. In this *qaside*, which runs for more than twenty verses, mention is made of the so-called *sure-ye al-ʿata* (the Sura of the Gift):

> If you are not blind, then read the Koran
> The *sure-ye al-ʿata* is said by 'Ali
> All he says he says in command of the Truth
> The verse *innama* is said by 'Ali.

These lines are an allusion to the search for the hidden meaning of the Koran, which is an important element in Badakhshani Ismailism. Why a Sura of the Gift? A sura named *al-ʿata* does not occur in the Koran. Some light may be shed on these rather enigmatic verses by the story of 'Ali and the beggar, which is told in one of the narrative poems recited in *maddah*.

Narrative poems, called *hekayat* or *qesse*, form the lengthiest part of *maddah*, sometimes lasting for more than an hour. A *hekayat* in *maddah* always deals with a miracle performed by a holy person, very often 'Ali himself. 'Ali is invariably painted as *moshkelgosha*, solver of problems. Although the role of 'Ali indicates the Shiite tendency of those who use this poetry, there is never a pronounced Shiite–Sunni opposition in the *hekayat*s. Except for a reverence for the Prophet and the Imams, which is naturally present throughout *maddah* in general, the *hekayat*s do not display the hostility to Sunnism characteristic of many examples of Iranian *taʿziye* and *rowzekhani*. Badakhshani *maddah* does not focus on the martyrdom of 'Ali and his sons: in fact, this is hardly an issue. 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn are pictured as settled kings, as holy Imams whose miracles serve the individual goal of a stereotype figure in need, such as a prince or a beggar. The enemies are enemies not of the Imams directly but of the figures they help, infidels whom the Imams do not have to fear because their own power is incomparably greater than that of

people such as the cruel king who kills his own daughter. The figures who need help are more in the foreground than the Imams, although of course the principal aim of the stories is to convince the audience of their power. Dreams, spells and magic often feature in the *hekayat*s.

The qualities of 'Ali are described in many specimens of poetry from Badakhshan. He is the most important figure in the Ismaili belief of the Badakhshanis, and as such he frequently appears in all genres of *maddah* poetry, often together with his mule Duldul, his two-edged sword Zu'l-Fiqar and his faithful servant Qambar. Other genres of poetry touch cursorily upon his heroic deeds, but in the *hekayat*s there is ample room to describe his qualities at large.

The *hekayat* about 'Ali and the beggar may have some bearing on the enigmatic reference to the 'Sura of the Gift'. This story opens in Medina, where a beggar comes to ask for some bread in a mosque in which more than four hundred are gathered. However, no one gives him a single dirham. 'Ali is also praying there, and in the midst of prayers, while bowed in worship, he hands over his ring to the beggar. The *hekayat* says:

> He reached out his ringed finger
> And he made clear to the beggar:
> 'Take this ring from my hand
> Go and buy yourself some bread'
> The beggar took the seal-ring from his hand
> But he was amazed and stayed in his place
> When the king of religion finished his prayers
> The beggar spoke: 'Oh munificent Imam
> I am not aware of its value
> How much bread can I ask for this ring?'
> The king said: 'Take bread as much
> As this ring weighs, nothing more and nothing less'
> The beggar decided for himself
> That he would keep the ring as his heart's seal (verses 14–20).[5]

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5   See for more details on this *hekayat* G. van den Berg, op. cit., 614–615.

The beggar is astonished by this gift, and asks how much bread he should ask for the ring. 'Ali answers: an amount as much as the weight of this ring. The beggar decides not to sell the ring but to keep it. But, when he reaches some infidels, he notices the shops and feels his hunger. He decides to sell the ring to the baker. At first the baker refuses, saying that silver is much more valuable than bread. When the beggar persists, the baker can no longer fight the temptation and places on the scales along with some bread. The ring appears to have the weight of more than 300 loaves of bread, which is more than the baker has in his shop. Out of anger, the baker deceives the beggar by claiming the ring was his. He calls some friends as witnesses, who declare before a judge that the ring does indeed belong to the baker. The goldsmith further declares that he made the ring for the baker. And so, the beggar is charged with theft and his hand is cut off. In deep grief, the beggar returns to Medina and consults 'Ali for the second time. 'Ali promises to help the beggar, and the *hekayat* continues:

> He said: 'Oh injured and heart-broken man
> Do not be bereaved because of my generosity
> Do not grieve more, come with me
> So that we may light the candle of your heart'
> That beggar kissed the feet of the king
> He rubbed his eye against his stirrup (verses 63–65).

Together 'Ali and the beggar return to the goldsmith, who persists in claiming that he made the ring. 'Ali then asks the smith to melt the ring and to make it anew, as absolute proof of his claim. However, the smith is not able to melt the ring in his fire. Then 'Ali asks the smith to smash the ring to pieces with his hammer. But he is not able to do that either, and the ring jumps away and tears out the smith's eye. The smith admits his guilt, whereupon both his eye and the beggar's hand are restored to their previous state. After these miracles, four hundred infidels are converted to Islam and the smith gives the beggar one hundred dirham plus a gold and silver coat of honour.

In this *hekayat*, as in the majority of *hekayat*s sung in Badakhshan, the picture of 'Ali is of an ideal king: he is the just ruler of the world

who defends the weak and punishes the disrespectful. He is endowed
with divine grace, which enables him to perform miracles in the service
of the religion of Islam.

The background to the story of ''Ali and the beggar'
in relation to the 'Sura of the Gift'

In Badakhshani *maddah*, numerous stories refer to the heroic and no-
ble deeds of 'Ali. Often it is quite complicated if not impossible to
obtain information about the background and source of poetry sung in
an oral tradition. In this case, however, the pen name found at the end
of this and a number of other *hekayat*s has proven very valuable. The
name 'Faregh' leads us to a sixteenth-century text, the *Ketab-i Faregh*,
the 'Book of Faregh'. The Faregh in question is Husayn ibn Hasan
Faregh-i Gilani, a sixteenth-to-seventeenth-century poet at the Safavid
court who dedicated a book of miracles on 'Ali to Shah 'Abbas on the
occasion of his conquest of Gilan, in the year 1000 A.H./1591–1592
A.D.[6] The book appears to have a Twelver Shiite outlook, although in
maddah poetry it is not unusual to find Imami aspects.

     The stories composed by Faregh were probably not invented by
him; it is more likely that he made use of existing themes and stories.
Although the exact sources of his *hekayat*s can hardly be traced, their
origin is probably connected to the Koran or the Hadith. An allusion
to a quality of 'Ali or one of the other heroes may be elaborated into a
whole story, as seems to be the case here. The story of the generosity
displayed by 'Ali in prayer appears to have its origin in a verse from the
Koran, namely the Sura al-Ma'ida, 'The Table', that is, sura 5, verse 55
(60). This verse starts with the word *innama*, and is referred to as the

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6   On Faregh-e Gilani and the Ismaili poetry of Tajik Badakhshan, see G. van den
     Berg, "Ismaili Poetry in Tajik Badakhshan: A Safavid Connection?", *Persica* 17
     (2001), 1–9.

'Sura of the Gift' in *maddah* poetry, as we have seen in the *qaside* above. The verse of the Koran runs as follows:

> Your only protectors are God, His apostle and the faithful: those who attend to their prayers, render the alms levy and kneel down in worship.[7]

Crucial are the final words of this verse, which are thought to refer specifically to 'Ali and would elevate him to a position next to God and the Prophet Muhammad. In many examples of *maddah* poetry 'Ali is endowed with a divine status. To the Ismailis of Badakhshan this verse may be seen as important 'proof' of the status of 'Ali, and it is for this reason that bears the name 'Sure-ye al-'ata'. It is as if the verse represents a complete sura – which it may do, in the context of the search for meaning beyond the outward expressions of the Koran. The search for the inner aspects *(baten)* of outward appearances *(zaher)* is an important aspect of Ismaili faith, on which much emphasis is laid in the poetry sung in *maddah*. References to the Koran verse 5: 55 and the story connected with it appear in a number of poems sung in the *maddah* tradition of Badakhshan.

The connection between Koran 5: 55, that is, the Badakhshani 'Sura of the Gift', and the story of 'Ali and the beggar has a long tradition behind it. An allusion to the same story is present in the major work of a well-known tenth-century Persian Sufi poet Sana'i, the *Hadiqat al-haqiqat*:

> dar qiyam-o qo'ud 'ud u kard
> dar roku'-o sojud jud u kard
>
> In standing and sitting, he visited the sick ones
> In inclination and prostration, he showed generosity

To explain this line by Sana'i, the editor of this text, Modarres Razavi, quotes an anecdote from a Persian commentary on the Koran by Abu al-Futuh Razi, a Shiite theologian who lived between 1087 and 1131 A. D.[8]

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7   The translation is by N. J. Dawood, *The Koran*, London, 1994 (first published 1956).
8   The commentary is entitled *Rowz al-Jenan wa Rowh al-Janan* and has been published in Tehran in 1905 and 1937.

They have said that at the moment when this verse came down the friends were all at prayer. Some had just finished their prayers, some were performing the *ruku'* and some were in *sujud.* In the midst of them they saw a *darwish* who circumambulated the mosque, begging. God's messenger called him and said: 'Did someone give you something?' He said: 'That young knight who is praying gave me a silver ring.' He (Muhammad) said: 'What kind of state was he in when he gave it to you?' He (the *darwish*) said: 'He was in *ruku'*, he pointed at his finger while he was praying. And I received the ring from his finger.' When they looked, it was 'Ali Mortaza. The messenger of God spoke the verse and pointed to him. And therefore this verse is in meaning specific, although in expression it is general: he said it in general to the believers and 'Ali is meant by this, and it is appropriate that they use it in general.[9]

The commentary in fact summarizes the function of this verse in the *maddah* tradition of Badakhshan: the story is specific, but its meaning serves as an example of behaviour for the Ismaili audience.

Conclusion

The Imam 'Ali and the Persian poet Naser-e Khosrow feature extensively in the oral poetry of the Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan, who regard the performance of *maddah* as an ultimate form of religious education. *Maddah* sessions are held on a variety of occasions, though most importantly as part of a funeral ceremony. The poetry sung in *maddah* may be characterized as religious poetry, very often deriving from or reminiscent of classical Persian Sufi poetry. Local legend connects the tradition of singing *maddah* with the medieval champion of Ismailism, the poet and philosopher Naser-e Khosrow. The poetic elaboration of a Koranic verse, renamed 'The Sura of the Gift' in *maddah*, shows how the Badakhshani *maddahkhans* have taken over an early tradition concerning 'Ali and developed it into a religious tradition that is still very much alive today.

9   Translated from M. T. Modarres Razavi, *Ta'liqat-e Hadiqat al-Haqiqa*, Tehran 1345/1965, 383–384.

Werner Ende

Success and Failure of a Shiite Modernist: Muhammad ibn Muhammad Mahdi al-Khalisi (1890–1963)

Since 1920, the year in which the British Mandate authorities installed a first cabinet in Iraq, the history of that country may be seen in large part as one of efforts by the Shiite population to increase their share of key political, administrative and military positions – and thus, from their point of view, to make internal political conditions more equitable.[1] In March 1947, when Salih Jabr became the first Shiite prime minister of modern Iraq – heading the fortieth government to be formed since 1920 – an important demand of politically conscious Shiites seemed to have been fulfilled.[2] The feelings that this aroused among quite a few Sunnis may be gauged from the fact that, soon after Salih Jabr took office, demonstrations in Baghdad that initially had nothing to do with religious issues escalated into a situation where students from the Sunni *Kulliyyat al-shari'a* chanted the slogan: 'Down

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1   For various aspects of this problem see H. Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, Princeton, N.J., 1978, 12–50 and passim; A. Kelidar, "The Shiʿi Imami Community and Politics in the Arab East", *Middle Eastern Studies* 19 (1983), 3–16; E. Kedourie, "The Iraqi Shiʿis and their Fate", in M. Kramer (ed.), *Shiʿism, Resistance, and Revolution*, Boulder/Col. and London, 1987, 135–157; W. Ende, *Arabische Nation und islamische Geschichte*, Beirut and Wiesbaden, 1977, 132–153; P.-J. Luizard, *La formation de l'Irak contemporain*, Paris 1991, 2002; Y. Nakash, *The Shiʿis of Iraq*, Princeton, 1994.

2   For the history of Iraqi cabinets see ʿA. R. al-Hasani: *Tarikh al-wizarat al-ʿiraqiyya*, 10 vols., 7th ed. Baghdad, 1988. For the cabinets headed by Jabr and Sadr, respectively, see 7: 160 ff.

with the *rafidi*!'.[3] The Jabr government fell in January 1948, but its successor (which lasted not quite six months) was also headed by a Shiite, Muhammad al-Sadr.

The next ten years were marked, *inter alia*, by two developments which at first sight seem to have nothing to do with each other: bitter feuds between leading Shiite 'ulama' or their respective followings (feuds, therefore, *within* Iraq's Shiite community); and simultaneous efforts to achieve a not only political, but also theological rapprochement between Shiites and Sunnis. These efforts came almost exclusively from the Shiite side. Their most prominent, and controversial, representative was the *mujtahid* Muhammad Mahdi al-Khalisi (b. 1890, d. Kazimiyya 1963), a theologian from an Iraqi Arab family.[4] After many years of exile in Iran (from 1922 onwards), he returned to Iraq in the postwar period (1949) and built up a *madrasa* (earlier founded by his father) into an institute called *Jam'iyyat Madinat al-'Ilm*.[5] At the same time, he kept up lively journalistic activity,[6] and in this connection one of the goals he pursued was a better understanding between Christians

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3   Kelidar, op. cit., 15, see also Hasani, op. cit., 7: 265. It should be noted, however, that slogans expressing confessional bias were not typical of those demonstrations, see Batatu, op. cit., 545–566, and M. Shabib, *Wathba fi l-'Iraq wa-suqut Salih Jabr*, Baghdad, 1988.

4   Kelidar, ibid., 9, and Luizard, *La vie* (see fn. 11 below), 28.

5   The name of this institution is related to the hadith "Ana madinat al-'ilm wa-'Ali babuha". The authenticity and religious importance of this hadith is being stressed in Shiite literature – see, e.g., M. al-Amin: *A'yan al-shi'a*, 3rd ed., 1960, 3/1: 55 and 62 ff. As far as the Sunni tradition is concerned, this hadith is accepted by Tirmidhi (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, ed. Da"as, 9, Hims 1968, 306 f.). Later authors, however, have called its wording in question or rejected it completely, see Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1200): *Kitab al-mawdu'at*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad 'Uthman, Medina 1966, 349–355, and J. al-Suyuti (d. 1505), *Al-la'ali al-masnu'a fi l-ahadith al-mawdu'a*, 1, Cairo, n. d., 329–336.

6   A list of his publications (both books and pamphlets) in Arabic and Persian is to be found in K. 'Awwad, *Mu'jam al-mu'allifin al-'iraqiyyin*, 3 vols., Baghdad 1969, 3: 235–239. For his Persian publications see also K. Moshar, *Fehrest-e ketabha-ye chapi-ye farsi*, (ed. Yārshāter) 3 (Index), Tehran, 1973, 71 (n. n. Khalesi-Zadeh), and idem: *Mo'allefin-e kotob*, 5, Tehran, 1964, cols. 449–453.

and Muslims.[7] In 1954 he took part in a well-attended international event in Lebanon to promote greater dialogue[8] – although, of course, this did not prevent him from engaging in missionary work towards non-Muslims.[9]

Under the conditions of *relative* freedom of the press that prevailed until the 1958 revolution, a whole series of debates on religious, cultural-historical and political questions arose between Khalisi and his many opponents in both the Shiite and Sunni camps. These centred in the end on Khalisi's defence of a (generally non-radical) modernism, and his attempt to use this as the basis for a Sunni-Shiite rapprochement *(taqrib)* at the levels of theology and Islamic law. Although it did not escape intervention by the censors, the debate was relatively open and sometimes displayed great bitterness. The questions at issue would never be raised again in this way after 1958, yet they form *part* of the background for an understanding of later developments – not only in Iraq.[10]

In contrast to the role that Khalisi and his father, Muhammad Mahdi (d. 1925), played in previous decades in Iraq and (after 1922/23) in Iran,[11] this later period in the life of Muhammad b. Muhammad Mahdi

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7   According to G. Krotkoff: "Kazimen – ein shiʿitischer Wallfahrtsort", *Bustan* 9 (1968), 60 f.

8   See *The Proceedings of the First Muslim-Christian Convocation*, Bhamdoun, Lebanon, April 22–27, 1954, published by […] Continuing Committee on Muslim-Christian Cooperation, n. p., 1955. Concerning Khalisi see in particular 3 ff., 11, 65 ff. and the picture following 24. According to the text of the proceedings as a whole, it seems that Khalisi became more or less marginalized in the course of the Bhamdoun convention.

9   A case of Khalisi's alleged success in this respect is reported in his book *Al-tawhid wa-l-wahda*, Baghdad, 1954, 37–39: two Yazidis and (previously) a Christian had come to the office of Jamʿiyyat Madinat al-ʿIlm and had declared their conversion to (Shiite?) Islam. Concerning al-Khalisi's missionary work, but also his efforts to promote a rapprochement between Sunnites and Shiites see also M. Reisch, *Im Auto nach Koweit*, Vienna, 1953, in particular 218–220.

10 For an excellent survey and analysis of the attempts at a rapprochement, in particular in the Arab world, see R. Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20ᵗʰ Century*, Leiden and Boston, 2004.

11 See P.-J. Luizard, "Shaykh Muhammad al-Khalisi (1890–1963) and his Political Role in Iraq and Iran in the 1910s/20s", in R. Brunner and W. Ende (eds.), *The*

al-Khalisi (who, unlike his father, soon acquired and always kept the name 'Khalesi-Zadeh') has until recently received scarcely any attention in Western historical research and Islamic studies, despite the fact that in the 1950s he was one of the best-known Shiite figures in Iraq. One of the reasons for this may be that anyone who wishes to study in detail the religious and religious-political debates of the 1950s usually does not have full access to the Iraqi press of the time; the archives abroad are very sparse, and for years serious difficulties have stood in the way of library research inside the country. Furthermore, since the Iraq war of 2003, a large amount of archival and library material has been lost.

A review of those debates of the 1950s , and at least the kind of cursory analysis that I propose to make here, would be impossible if Khalisi and his fiercest opponent in the Sunni camp, the writer and journalist Mahmud al-Mallah (d. 1969), had not taken the trouble in later years to collect and republish their newspaper or magazine articles in the form of books and pamphlets.[12] These editions exist in a number of Arab libraries outside Iraq, and some have even found their way to Europe and America.

Since each of the two main protagonists also quotes and comments in his writings on the views of his opponent and other authors, we can gradually form quite a good idea of the themes and course of the debate, the personality of those who took part in it, and the general cultural-political atmosphere in Iraq at that time. This gives us an insight into a level of discussion some way *beneath* the one visible at pan-Islamic conferences, with their diplomatically polished resolutions, or in the occa-

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Twelver Shiis in Modern Times, Leiden etc., 2001, 223–235. Concerning his father (d. 1925), see *La vie de l'ayatollah Mahdi al-Khalisi par son fils*, trans. from Arabic by P.-J. Luizard, Paris 2005, and (anon.) art. "Al-mujahid al-kabir al-Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi al-Khalisi" (with a number of documents), *Al-Mawsim*, 3 (1990/ 1412 h), 728–759.

12 With regard to Khalisi see fn. 6 (above), concerning Mallah the list of titles in 'Awwad, op. cit., 3: 283–4. A few of Mallah's anti-Shiite polemics have been re-printed in an anonymous volume called *Majmu' al-sunna, li-ta'ifat min al-'ulama'*, n. p., n. d., 2 vols.

sional and polite correspondence between a Sheikh al-Azhar and an Ayatollah 'Uzma. It must certainly be borne in mind, however, that on the Sunni side it was mainly 'Effendis' and only rarely 'ulama' who conducted debates in Iraq at the time. If the Sunni 'ulama' did play a role, it was rather marginal and usually remained hidden to observers.

This was also true of the debates relating to Khalisi. He himself bitterly complained about the excuses, or actual resistance, that he encountered whenever he approached the Sunni 'ulama' at the Baghdad shrine of the Imam al-A'zam, Abu Hanifa, in order to discuss the possibility of bringing Sunnis and Shiites closer together. It is true that once, in or around 1950, he and his followers managed to go from Kazimiyya to A'zamiyya and to perform Friday prayers there at the shrine of Abu Hanifa – but nothing ever came of it. Khalisi's further wish that he and his followers might pray behind a Sunni imam in A'zamiyya, thereby showing that there was no fundamental difference between Shiites and Sunnis, was evidently rejected out of hand. Moreover – as he later wrote – the 'ulama' in A'zamiyya avoided all contacts with him, or countered his appeals by even whipping up an anti-Shia movement in the area. At a banquet held by a sheikh from the 'Azza tribe, where there was supposed to be discussion of possible unity among Muslims, they put in an appearance but, as soon as the meal was over, left the *majlis* without having said a word on the subject.[13]

While the Sunni 'ulama' held back or – as in the case of Sheikh Jalal al-Hanafi from Baghdad – enumerated all the obstacles in the path of rapprochement,[14] a Sunni 'layman', the above-mentioned author Mahmud al-Mallah,[15] rejected Khalisi's gestures and words with the

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13 *Al-tawhid wa-l-wahda*, 11. For the tribe of al-'Azza see M. Freiherr von Oppenheim, *Die Beduinen*, (ed. Werner Caskel), Wiesbaden, 1952, 3: 390 ff.

14 *Niqash ma'a al-imam al-Khalisi*, Baghdad, 1953.

15 For his biography and work as a poet see M. al-Hubayyib, *Al-Mallah al-sha'ir, dirasa tahliliyya*, Baghdad, 1962, and Y. al-Shaykh Ibrahim al-Samarra'i, *Ta'rikh 'ulama' Baghdad fi l-qarn al-rabi' 'ashar al-hijri*, Baghdad, n.d. (1978/79), 633 ff. Hubayyib avoids any reference to Mallah as a religious polemicist, while Samarra'i praises him for his struggle against what he calls "shu'ubiyya" and "batiniyya", and mentions a number of his relevant publications.

utmost ferocity. In fact, he never tired of taking to task fellow-Sunnis who proved too accommodating – for example, during a trip that Khalisi had made in 1954 to Syria, Egypt and Hijaz. Writing mainly in the periodical *al-Sijill* (later a daily paper), Mallah seemed convinced that *all* Shiite statements and gestures in favour of *taqrib* and eventual unity of Muslims were ultimately intended to win converts to the Shia from the Sunni ranks, and therefore served to weaken true (Sunni) Islam. According to him Shiism – the Twelver Shia or any other Shiite group – was not a *madhhab* of Islam but a different religion *(din)*, and for this reason there could be no reconciliation with it. The principle of *taqiyya* permitted Shiites such as Khalisi to do and say things that repeatedly kindled ecumenical illusions in naive Sunnis.[16] Mallah – not without sarcasm – found words of praise for past or present Shiite authors only when they were completely untouched by modernism and ideas of *taqrib*. Thus in 1956, in a kind of obituary following the death of Muhammad Hasan al-Muzaffar, he wrote that this Shiite scholar and author of the three-volume *Dala'il al-sidq,* a defence of the 'Allama al-Hilli against Ibn Taymiyya,[17] first published in 1953, had at least been honest in his spirited obstinacy.[18] For the work of the *Jam'iyyat al-taqrib bayn al-madhahib al-islamiyya*,[19] a joint Shia-Sunni society founded in Cairo in 1947, he had nothing but scorn or abhorrence.[20]

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16 *Al-ara' al-sariha li-bina' qawmiyya sahiha*, Baghdad n. d. (1952?), 67–70. Concerning the *taqiyya* of the Shiites see idem, *Ta'rikhuna l-qawmi bayn al-salb wa-l-ijab*, Baghdad 1956, 41–50. With regard to the issue of *taqrib*, see the references mentioned in fn. 20 here below. For the background and function of these extreme anti-Shiite positions see Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*, in particular 249–275.

17 'Awwad, *Mu'jam*, 3, 142; for the *Dala'il al-sidq* see Ende, *Arabische Nation* (fn. 1 above), 115.

18 Mallah, *Al-ara' al-sariha*, 77–80; see also his remarks on the occasion of the publication of Muzaffar's *Dala'il*, reprinted ibid., 57–61.

19 For the history and activities of this organization see Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*, passim.

20 See, e. g., *Al-ara' al-sariha*, 36, 86, 100 and 103, also *Tarikhuna l-qawmi*, 51–64, 93 f., 99, and *Al-mujiz 'ala l-wajiz wa-mabahith ukhra*, Baghdad 1956, 105, 124–126, 129–134.

Mallah's polemics undoubtedly contributed to the fact that, within the Iraqi organization of the Muslim Brotherhood *(Jam'iyyat al-Ukhuwwa al-Islamiyya)*, those who gained the upper hand in the early 1950s represented extreme anti-Shia views and wanted to have nothing to do with activities along the lines of the Cairo-based *taqrib* society. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood and a few related organizations in Iraq were among the most avid readers of *al-Sijill*.[21] It is true that individual leading *Ikhwan* made efforts to reduce tensions and to work with Shiites,[22] but the number of Shiite members of the Brotherhood remained extremely low. The Sunni majority persisted in their traditional mistrust of the *'rawafid'*.

Even references to the fact that the founder and *murshid 'amm* of the Egyptian *Ikhwan*, Hasan al-Banna, had belonged to the friends of the *taqrib* association in Cairo until his assassination in 1949 were incapable of making his Iraqi fellow-travellers change their mind.[23] Sunni opponents of *taqrib* in Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia must have had a hand in this. Khalisi speaks of one episode in Cairo that occurred in 1954 during his visit to the house of the *taqrib* association, when he complained to the then-leader of the Brotherhood, Hasan al-Hudaibi, that certain *Ikhwan* 'outside Egypt' allowed only members of a particular *madhhab* to join the organization and behaved in a hostile manner toward other Islamic communities. Hudaibi apparently promised to send someone to Baghdad to explain the principles of the Egyptian Brothers, including their orientation to the unity of all Muslims. But a Sunni scholar present at the conversation – who, though not mentioned by name, was almost certainly al-Hajj Amin al-Husaini (the former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem) – talked Hudaibi out of continuing with the project.[24]

21 I. M. Husaini, *The Moslem Brethren*, Beirut, 1956, 84.
22 Shaykh M. M. al-Sawwaf, *Min sijill dhikrayati*, Cairo, 1987, 134 f., 146 f., 268 ff. For some time Sawwaf was one of the leaders of the Muslim Brethren in Iraq.
23 Khalisi, *Al-tawhid wa-l-wahda*, 4; Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*, esp. 180–183. For Mallah's opinion concerning Banna and his attitude see his *Al-ara' al-sariha*, 100.
24 Khalisi, *Al-tawhid*, 3 ff.

The failure of Khalisi's 'ecumenical' efforts was not due only to coolness or hostility among Iraq's Sunni 'ulama' and the militant opposition of (sometimes openly pro-Wahhabi) individuals such as Mallah and movements such as the Iraqi *Ikhwan*. Another factor was that, after a few successful years when the number of his supporters had increased, Khalisi fell victim to bitter resistance from the Shiite 'ulama' and their following – in part because his efforts to achieve *taqrib* (and eventual unity) of Muslims were bound up with a relatively consistent modernism that was rejected, for whatever reason, by a majority of Shiites in Iraq. In 1949, two books by Khalisi had called upon his fellow-Shiites not only to stop neglecting public Friday prayers[25] but, if possible, to perform them *together with Sunnis*.[26] In the *khutba*, Shiite preachers would have had to give up everything that Sunnis might find objectionable, and in the call to prayer (the *adhan*) the 'third *shahada*' containing the formula *Ashhadu anna 'Aliyan wali Allah* ('I affirm that 'Ali is the *wali* of God') would have had to be dropped.

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25 For a survey of Shiite writing on this subject see H. Modarresi Tabataba'i, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, London, 1984, 177–204. Concerning the long-standing neglect among Shiites of the Friday prayer on the one hand and its revival in modern times on the other see A.A. Sachedina, *The Just Ruler in Shi'ite Islam*, New York and Oxford, 1988, 177–204; J.R.I. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq*, Berkeley, etc., 1988, 127–139 and 142–144; Y. Richard, "La fonction parénétique du 'Alem: La prière du Vendredi en Iran depuis la revolution", *Die Welt des Islams*, 29 (1989), 61–82. Already at the time of his exile in Iran, Khalisi had demanded (and practised) the public performance of Friday prayers, see S.A. Arjomand, "Ideological Revolution in Shi'ism", in idem (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism*, Albany/N.Y., 1988, 188 and 199 (see also fn. 26 below).

26 Khalisi, *Al-Jum'a, Kitab fiqhi istidlali fi wujub salat al-jum'a* […], Baghdad, 1949. According to the colophon (213), the author had finished writing the manuscript already in December 1933 in Iran. In an appendix to the printed work (214–220), there is a debate – in verses – between Khalisi and a religious scholar from Kashan concerning the necessity of holding the communal Friday prayer in public. According to Khalisi, this debate took place in 1942. With regard to the joint prayer of Shiites and Sunnites and related issues see idem, *Al-Jum'a al-jami'a*, 1st ed. Baghdad, 1949, 2nd ed. Baghdad, 1951. For a polemical reply see Mallah, "Al-jum'a al-mufarriqa", reprinted in *Majmu' al-sunna* (fn. 12 above), 1: 124 ff.

In the first volume of his *Ihya' al-shari'a fi madhhab al-shi'a*, pub-
lished in Baghdad in 1951 (though, he informs us, written a good two
years earlier in Iran), Khalisi repeats and explains his proposal and, more
especially, situates it within a broader conception of a modernizing re-
form of Shiism. Only by putting aside unlawful innovations *(bida')*
such as the third *shahada* of the *adhan*, the practice of self-flagellation
during Muharram,[27] the cursing of the *sahaba*, and so on, only then –
and only if Sunnis abandon comparable *bida',* too – will it be possible
to bring the sharia back into force and achieve the unity of Muslims.[28]

In his preface to the second volume of the *Ihya'*, which appeared in
1957, the editor 'Abd al-Rasul al-Khatib reported the echo that the
reform proposals in the first volume had already found.[29] After a few
words about positive reactions, such as the translation of the first volume
into Persian, al-Khatib (who in 1954 had been editor of Khalisi's short-
lived weekly *Majallat Madinat al-'Ilm*) turned to a consideration of the
sixty or so polemical writings that had been directed against it, especially
from the camp of the Shiite subgroup of Shaykhiyya that Khalisi had
fiercely attacked.[30] The *Azhar Journal* (whose chief editor from 1952

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27 Concerning the controversial issue of flagellations and other Shiite 'Ashura' prac-
    tices see W. Ende, "The Flagellations of Muharram and the Shi'ite 'ulama'", *Der
    Islam* 55 (1978), 19–36, and Nakash, op. cit., 141–162.

28 Similar statements are to be found in idem, *Al-jum'a al-jami'a*, passim, and in the
    preface by 'Abd al-Rasul al-Khatib to the 3rd volume of *Ihya' al-shari'a*, Baghdad,
    1957. Concerning the necessity of simultaneous reforms at al-Azhar and other
    Sunnite institutions see Khalisi, *Al-tawhid wa-l-wahda*, 3. According to a passage
    in vol. 2 of the *Ihya'* (preface) some of Khalisi's Shiite opponents carried their
    polemics against his reform moves to the extreme of calling him a Wahhabi. In
    the 1980s there were polemics in Pakistan, mainly by followers of the Shaykhiyya
    (see below fn. 30), against what they called "the Khalisi party" or "Shii Wahhabis",
    that is, people propagating Khalisi's ideas: see Syed H. A. Naqvi, "The Contro-
    versy (etc.)", in R. Brunner / W. Ende (eds), *The Twelver Shia*, 135–149, esp. 144,
    146–148.

29 Ibid., preface, "alif"-"ta'".

30 A summary of Khalisi's criticism of the Shaykhiyya is his book *Al-shaykhiyya wa-
    l-babiyya*, Baghdad 1951. For the history and doctrine of this sect see art.
    "Shaykhiyya", in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden: Brill, 1997: 9, 403–5.

to 1958–59 was the bitterly anti-Shiite Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib) had commented negatively on this first volume.[31] In addition to that, Khalisi had been exposed to the hostility of many others. Concerned about the consequences, a number of highly placed figures in Iraqi politics, state administration, literature and science had asked him in letters why, through his demands, he had made it possible for certain people to mobilize against him the ignorant yet innocent masses who just happened to be attached to corrupt but longstanding forms of religious life. Today – these well-meaning critics pointed out – Khalisi found himself without allies and almost without supporters. The chance of becoming supreme *mujtahid* of all Twelver Shiites had been squandered, and his isolation meant that he had lost all prestige with the government. Other leading Shiite ‘ulama’, who, against their better knowledge, had remained silent about the *bida‘* which were attacked by Khalisi, had kept or even increased their following and used the money donated by the faithful to build religious schools and educate many students. Khalisi's answer to these reproaches was of the kind one might expect from a religious reformer: if such things can be achieved only at the price of truth, I want no part of them and prefer to go my own way alone.[32]

When he wrote this, in 1957, Khalisi had indeed lost a large part of his following. More damaging than any other of his modernist statements seems to have been his appeal to drop the third *shahada* in the call to prayer (‘Ali is the *wali* of God) – or, to be more precise, his declaration that it was a *bid‘a* which ‘has to disappear’.[33] In saying this, he set himself against a compromise that the Shiite scholarly authorities had taken great pains to reach.

In the early centuries of Islam, Ibn Babawayh (or Ibn Babuyah, known as al-Saduq, d. 991/92) and others had unambiguously rejected the attempts of many Shiites to make the ‘third *shahada*’ part of the call

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31 On Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib and his role see Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*, 255–275.

32 *Ihya’ al-shari‘a*, 2, preface, “ya” – “nun”.

33 Ibid., 1, 2nd ed. Baghdad 1965, 208 f. Concerning the quotation from Ibn Babaway see Eliash (see fn. 34 below). Also Khalisi, *Al-haqq yadmagh al-batil, fi munaqashat du‘at al-shahada al-thalitha fi l-adhan*, Baghdad, 1955.

to prayer. Then, centuries later, a divergent view took shape which al-Majlisi (d. 1699) formulated as follows: The declaration of 'Ali's *wilaya* in the *adhan* is to be recommended, and anyone who does declare his belief in it commits no sin.[34]

For the mass of Shiite believers, the addition of this 'third *shahada*' to the other two professions of belief (in God and the Prophet) – a practice seemingly encouraged by the Safawis [35] – made the declaration of 'Ali's *wilaya* a firm and consecrated part of the call to prayer. Abdoljavad Falaturi described this as 'a further, characteristic example of the power of popular belief and the pressure this puts on theologians'. As regards the actual popularity of this third *shahada*, and the fact that 'a simple Shiite would consider his prayer invalid if he did not perform it in accordance with the well-known traditional custom', a number of important theologians who otherwise kept strictly to the theological sources felt compelled to hold fire in order to avoid an offence to popular feelings. Even Ayatollah Borujerdi (d. 1961), in his rejection of the third *shahada* as part of the *adhan*, added that it was nevertheless 'good' to pronounce this formula after the words *Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasul Allah* – that is, with the aim of pleasing God.[36]

In reality, the position taken by Borujerdi (with the support of other judgements, nearly all in line with Majlisi) has remained the dominant one down to the present day.[37] Of course, the Shiite scholars who fol-

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34 J. Eliash, "On the Genesis and Development of the Twelver-Shi'i Three-tenet Shahadah", *Der Islam* 47 (1971), 265–272; I.K.A. Howard, "The Development of the Adhan and Iqama of the Salat in Early Islam", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 26 (1981), 219–228 (esp. p. 228), and L.A. Takim, "From Bid'a to Sunna. The Wilaya of 'Ali in the Shi'i Adhan", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120 (2000), 166–177.

35 Eliash, ibid., 267 f.

36 "Die Zwölfer-Schia aus der Sicht eines Schiiten. Probleme ihrer Untersuchung", in Erwin Gräf (ed.), *Festschrift Werner Caskel*, Leiden 1968, 66–95, esp. 77 f.

37 Eliash, op. cit., 265, fn. 2. A useful collection of Shiite fatwas and other statements endorsing the validity of the *shahada thalitha* is to be found in 'A. al-Musawi al-Muqarram, *Sirr al-iman*, 1st ed., Najaf, 1374h (1954/55), 2nd ed. with a supplement by Shaykh Nazih Qumayha, Beirut, 1996. For individual statements see, e.g., Ruhollah Musawi Khomeini, *Tawzih al-masa'el*, Tehran:

low it have been aware of the view of the highly regarded 'Church Father', Ibn Babawayh, on which Khalisi laid so much emphasis: namely, that the incorporation of the third *shahada* into the *adhan* is a *bid'a*, and hence an impermissible innovation. In view of the popular practice that developed in later times, but also with the aim of curbing Khalisi's religious and political influence, the overwhelming majority of the Shiite 'ulama' did not, however, lend any support to Ibn Babawayh's position. On the contrary: a number of influential Shiite scholars in Iraq appear to have kept silent in the face of the turmoil that Khalisi's modernizing approach caused among the mass of believers. Others – especially Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim Tabataba'i in Najaf (later the supreme *marja' al-taqlid* of the Twelver Shia, d. 1970) – spoke out against any idea that the third *shahada* in the *adhan* was a *bid'a*, which (allegedly) should be prevented.[38]

The circle of Khalisi's opponents – who were also present in Kazimiya, his own home town and centre of influence [39]– directed numerous tracts against him. The fact that most of these appeared in 1955 allows us to suppose that the dispute among Shiites concerning Khalisi and his views then reached its climax. Many of the titles indicate the bitterness of the polemic: for example, Muhammad 'Ali al-Najjar al-Kazimi's pamphlet *Al-Khalisi, the Musaylima of the Twentieth Century* (Najaf 1955), or 'Abd al-Mahdi al-Fa'iq's *Al-Khalisi, the Madman in the*

Entesharat-e Taheri, n.d. 191 ff., mas'aleh 919; 'A. Sharaf al-Din al-Musawi, *Al-nass wa-l-ijtihad*, Beirut, 1996, 207–208 (expressly stating that it is not a *bid'a*); H. al-Ha'iri, *Ahkam al-Shi'a*, I, Kuwait, 1972, 200 ff. (according to this author, the third *shahada* in the *adhan* is the symbol of Shiism); M. B. al-Sadr, *Al-fatawa l-wadiha*, I, 7th ed., Beirut, 1987, 387. For a Sunni fatwa against any addition to the *adhan*, see *Fatawa l-imam 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud*, I, Cairo, 1981, 426.

38 As repeatedly stated by Mallah. See, e. g., his *Al-ara' al-sariha*, 78, fn. 1.

39 'A. H. 'Abd 'Ali, *Al-Kazimiyyun bari'un min al-Khalisi*, Baghdad, 1955. According to Krotkoff, op. cit., there had even been an attempt, in the late 1950s, to poison al-Khalisi. Some of his opponents accused him of ambitions to declare himself to be the 12th Imam (i. e. the Mahdi), see I. al-Haydari, *Zur Soziologie des schiitischen Chiliasmus*, Freiburg, 1975, 149 ff.

Morass of his Lies and Slanders (Baghdad 1955).[40] A good dozen of such (mostly anti-Khalisi) writings are known to me from their titles.[41]

The sense of outrage that Khalisi's rivals and enemies stirred up among many ordinary believers soon totally shattered his apparent dream of gaining a leadership position within Shia Islam (for example, becoming supreme *marja' al-taqlid*). In this respect nothing changed when, in the second volume of *Ihya' al-shari'a*, Khalisi (or the author of the preface) again refuted the insinuation that he denied the *correctness* of the formula according to which 'Ali is the *wali* of God.[42]

Khalisi failed in his (essentially non-radical) attempts to modernize the interpretation of the sharia and to discard what he saw as harmful practices based on popular beliefs, as well as in his efforts to achieve a rapprochement between Shiites and Sunnis. The *nature* of this failure reveals a dilemma of the Twelver Shia clergy in the twentieth century, and not only in Iraq: Sunni polemicists such as Mallah fundamentally question all gestures at rapprochement on the Shiite side – and are to some degree successful in this. On the other hand, many Shiite scholars are only too willing, in order to preserve their influence over the

40 'A.J. 'Abd al-Rahman, *Fihrist al-matbu'at al-'iraqiyya, 1856–1972*, 1, Baghdad, 1978, 178 (see fn. 41 below). For a sharp criticism of Khalisi's ideas (but praise for his father) see M.S. Razi, *Ganjineh-ye daneshmandan*, 1, Tehran 1973, 229–231.

41 'Awwad, op. cit., 1: 173 (al-Wa'ili); 232 (al-Gulgawi, no. 5); 2: 224 (al-Hamadi, a pseudonym); 230 ('Abd 'Ali, nos. 1 and 2); 284 (Kan'an); 289 (al-Qadifi, nos. 7 and 9); 319 (al-Wardi, no. 2 – perhaps in favour of al-Khalisi); 353 (al-Fa'iq); 356 (al-Asadi, no. 1); 3: 167 (Shams al-Din, no. 5); 219 (Muhammad 'Ali al-Musawi al-Kazimi , no. 2, and al-Najjar al-Kazimi, no. 1); 231f. (al-Kazimi al-Qazwini, nos. 14 and 19); 279 (al-Hilli). See also Y.A. Daghir, *Masadir al-dirasa al- 'arabiyya*, 4, Beirut, 1983, 261 (mainly based on 'Awwad). A particular case is Muhammad Husayn al-Baghdadi *('Awwad*, 3: 150), probably a "disclosure" concerning Khalisi's (and his father's) contacts with Soviet diplomats in the 1920s in Iran. For this detail in the political life of both men see "V.O.", "Sobytiya v Mesopotamii i shiitskoe dukhovenstvo", *Novyi Vostok* 4 (1923), 425–433, esp. 426 and 433; Batatu, op. cit. 1141–1147, 1156–60; Werner Zürrer, *Persien zwischen England und Rußland 1918–1925*, Berne, 1978, 349–352, and Luizard, *La vie* (fn. 11 above), 301f., 308 and 312–15.

42 *Ihya' al-shari'a*, 2, "dal", see also 1 (2nd ed.), 208.

masses, to repulse reform proposals within their own ranks, including any that seek to overcome the divisions within Islam. This is a dilemma that contemporary political activism has not overcome but only masked and, to some extent, even accentuated.

Translated from German by PATRICK CAMILLER

Stephan Rosiny

The Twelver Shia Online: Challenges for its Religious Authorities[1]

Introduction

The technical terminology of the Internet has been entering the language in many fields. "Network" has become a synonym for informal, more or less loosely organized social connections among individuals, non-governmental and governmental institutions. "Networking" denotes a social activity of searching for "links" in order to acquire new resources for one's own benefit. The Internet mirrors and even symbolizes contemporary society: an ever changing substrate in which all people are interconnected by invisible bonds without necessarily knowing each other personally. In a way, the limits between reality and virtual reality are becoming more and more diffuse.

It is fascinating to observe how religions, which are somehow more accustomed than scientists to virtual reality, are coping with this technological revolution. Shiite Muslims have adopted the Internet quite easily as a tool for their purposes and have integrated it into their world of beliefs and religious practice. Its diffuse, cross-border medium seems to harmonize with their specific social experience and religious needs.

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1   A former version of this article has been published in *Maghreb–Machrek* 178 (2003–2004), 59–73, under the title "Internet et la marjaʿiyya: L'autorité religieuse au défi des nouveaux médias".

The impact of new media on the formation
of the Shiite clerical hierarchy

Since the nineteenth century, new means of mass education, communication and communication and transportation have been introduced into the Middle East. These have intensified and deepened translocal contacts among the formerly dispersed Shiite communities of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and the Arab Gulf countries, and they have deeply influenced the conception of religious normativity and authority. The growing sedentarization of the Arab tribes during the nineteenth century, the huge waves of urbanization in the twentieth century, the improvements in mass higher education through reforms to the state school system, the tremendous increase in commercial book publishing, the spread of mass media such as radio and television and the recent introduction of satellite TV and the Internet: all these trends have heralded fundamental changes in the conception of religious authority within Shiism. For example, the development and spread of the *marja' al-taqlid* as the highest-ranking Shiite legal expert *(mujtahid)* is strongly connected to these improved facilities of communication and mobilization.[2] It became easier for believers to refer important questions to the eminent legal experts at Najaf, Karbala and Qom and to pay their religious dues to them, so that *marja's* gradually built up networks of communication facilities and educational and charitable services, as well as publishing their own works. Educated layers were thus increasingly able to read these works, and to gain immediate access to information that had previously been mediated by a chain of regional and local representatives *(wakils).* All this strengthened the central authority of the *marja's* at the expense of local clergymen.[3]

2   Moussavi highlights the importance of the printing press, which spread through
      the region in the late nineteenth century and facilitated the publishing of the
      risala 'amaliya works of the *marja's* (A. K. Moussavi, *Religious Authority in Shi'ite
      Islam: From the Office of Mufti to the Institution of Marja',* Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996, 38).
3   D. J. Stewart, "Islamic Juridical Hierarchies and the Office of Marji' al-Taqlid" in
      L. Clarke (ed.), *Shi'ite Heritage*, Binghampton: Global Publications, 2001, 154.

High-ranking *mujtahids* also involved themselves more in day-to-day politics as they became able to intervene and mobilize their supporters on a short-term basis, even from abroad via telecommunications or leaflets. In Iran, the Tobacco Revolt of 1891–92 and the Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911) were stirred by the mobilization of senior Iranian *mujtahids* residing in Iraq, who used modern technologies such as the telegraph to transmit their verdicts and demands.[4] The same could also be observed in the late 1970s, when audio tapes with inflammatory sermons of Ayatollah Khomeini and other opponents of the Shah were smuggled into Iran and became an important tool for revolutionary mobilization.[5]

We are now experiencing a new step in this *information revolution*, as the spread of the Internet further "enlarges the public space of discourse about Islam".[6] It is still difficult to predict what impact this will have on the development of religious authority in Shiite Islam. Will it strengthen the position of the established authorities, who are able to afford the new technology and to pay a huge staff to manage and translate their websites?[7] This may fuel a process in which the Shiite theological hierarchy more and more focuses on the *marja' al-taqlid*. The institutionalization and consolidation of his charitable and educational

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4   M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*, New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1985, 205; Y. Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, 49.

5   A. Sreberny-Mohammadi and A. Mohammadi, *Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture, and the Iranian Revolution*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

6   J. W. Anderson, "The Internet and Islam's New Interpreters" in D. F. Eickelman et al. (eds), *New Media in the Muslim World,* Bloomington / Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999, 48.

7   'Ali al-Sistani, actually the most respected *marja'* in the Arab world, operates several websites, some of them in up to 27 languages! Apart from Arabic, http://www.aalulbayt.org and http://www.al-shia.com are translated into English, French, Russian, Chinese, German, Turkish, Kurmanji, Sorani, Tajik, Azeri, Bulgarian, Hausa, Fulani, Burmese, Urdu, Bosnian, Swahili, Bengali, Italian, Hindi, Spanish and Thai. Further sites of Sistani are: http://www.rafed.net, http://www.imamhadi.net, http://www.imamreza.net, http://www.aqaed.com and many more.

network may gain fresh momentum through its management and pro-
motion via the Internet.

But the *marjaʿiyya* might also face its biggest challenge, since the
new medium makes access easier to the kind of religious information
and knowledge that used to be the monopoly of an elite. The Internet
intensifies competition among the interpreters of Islamic teachings and
religious normative conduct. Hence, the function of middle and low-
ranking *mujtahids* and *ʿulama'* as intermediaries *(wakils)* to the *marjaʿs*
may also be further eroded. This probably compels them to establish a
following of their own and to bid for recognition as a *marjaʿ* much
earlier than before, as only then can they receive adequate donations
and build up their own networks of institutions. This may explain the
constantly increasing number of claimants to the *marjaʿiyya* since the
decease of Ruhullah Khomeini (d. 1989) and Abu al-Qasim Khu'i (d.
1992), the two most recognized *marjaʿs* of the 1980s.

Religious Authority in Shia Islam

In Shia Islam the mediation between believers and God takes place
through sacred rites and holy places, via oral transmission or scripture
as a formalized form of linguistic communication, in localities such as
hawzas, mosques, *Husayniyyas* and *maʿatim* that constitute an organiza-
tional framework for the transmission of knowledge and for religious
representation, and finally via descendants of the prophet Muhammad,
the sayyids, and figures of extraordinary learning, charisma or commit-
ment. Religious personalities manage these channels of communica-
tion. They transmit and interpret the content, but they also gain their
authority by determining the relevance of these media and by control-
ling access to them.

Several shifts may be observed within and between these types of
mediation, under the circumstances of a modernity that also challenges
the position of the religious authorities. Specific local rites are increas-

ingly complemented, or even replaced, by translocal practices. Parochial habits are superseded by abstract norms on a regional, national or even global level, which are more and more internalized by believers. Scripture and recently multimedia carriers replace the oral transmission of doctrines and legends. Personal religious instruction by local agents gives way to teaching through formalized mass education and even self-instruction through books, magazines, video tapes, mass media and digital media such as CD-ROM and the Internet. Better infrastructure as well as the growing complexity of modern societies leads to the formation of diversified networks: *hawzas* for learning and teaching; mosques and *husayniyyas* for practising collective rituals; publishing houses, radio and TV stations for spreading knowledge; and other institutions for managing modern religious "enterprises" such as welfare services, public schools and offices for contact between believers and religious personnel. Face-to-face relations between believers and local religious personnel give way to contacts with distant high-ranking *'ulama'*, which have become much easier thanks to modern tools of communication and transportation.

As we have mentioned already, the changes in Shia Islam run parallel to the formation, elaboration and institutionalization of religious authority, which manifests itself at its highest in the position of the *marja' al-taqlid*, the "most learned" *(al-a'lam)* among the *mujtahids*.[8] He satisfies the "emulation impulse" for ordinary believers *(muqallids)*, who have to choose one in the first place, then follow his *fatwas* and pay their religious duties *(al-huquq al-shar'iyya)*, the *khums* and *zakat*, and donations *(sadaqa)* to him. The *marja's* play an important role in determining ritual practice and normative behaviour, adapting them to the needs of changing circumstances. They write numerous legal treatises, which form an important segment of contemporary Shiite religious publishing.[9] Whole

8   For an Islamic justification of the principle of *a'lamiyya*, see M. I. Jannati, "Al-masar al-ta'rikhi li-utruhat luzum taqlid al-a'lam" in *Ara' fi-l-marja'iyya al-shi'iyya li majmu'a min al-bahithin*, Beirut: Dar al-Rawda, 1994, 87–109.

9   S. Rosiny, *Shi'a Publishing in Lebanon: With Special Reference to Islamic and Islamist Publications*, Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000, 37ff.

networks of educational and charitable institutions are financed and organized by them. In some cases, they even became the spiritual leader of a political Islamic movement, perhaps with its own armed militia.

Apart from these organizational tools held by some younger *marjaʿs*, and apart from the state clergy in Iran who appropriated governmental power under Khomeini's doctrine of *wilayat al-faqih* after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, an informal gaining of status and authority among believers is still the main path for legal experts in the Shiite communities. They have no coercive means at their disposal, only moral pressure and, best of all, the distribution of certain benefits to help them secure acceptance of their rulings.

The process of gaining and legitimizing religious authority is far from being formalized. Rather, it is an intellectual competition and a social struggle for acceptance as a *mujtahid* (with higher status among fellow *ʿulamaʾ*) and ultimately as a *marjaʿ al-taqlid*. Ideally there should be only one supreme *marjaʿ* leading the whole Shia community, but in recent times there have been always several *marjaʿs* simultaneously. They are not regarded as infallible, and their *ijtihad* may lead them to different opinions on the same issue. The *mujtahid* who wishes to become a *marjaʿ* has to prove his learning through numerous publications, and he has to build his own network of followers among the *ʿulamaʾ* and the believers *(muqallids)*. Furthermore, new doctrines have been introduced recently which allow the *muqallid* to choose among the *fatwas* of several *marjaʿs*, perhaps through some interpretation even of dead ones *(taqlid al-mayyit)*. Whereas the mainstream still restricts the powers of *ijtihad* to the juridical-theological specialist, more liberal interpretations go so far as to allow the educated layman to practise *ijtihad*. All this leads to a high degree of dynamism and plurality in Shiite jurisprudence.[10] Rivalry among *mujtahids* may include apologetic debate, defamation campaigns and sometimes even assassination

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10 R. Badry, "Marjaʿiyya and Shura", in R. Brunner and W. Ende (eds), *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001, 204 ff.

attempts.[11] Usually, however, communication is the crucial element in the acquisition and implementation of status and authority.

The Internet, as a new tool of communication, influences and accelerates the changes described above. The following examples of homepages[12] show the wide range of possible influence over legitimate religious norms and authority. It is therefore interesting to investigate the extent to which the Internet may challenge the established channels for the creation and legitimation of religious authority in Shia Islam.

Types and aims of Shiite homepages

There are special portals through which the interested person easily enters the "Shia Web". Some of these offer encyclopaedic information on Shiite history and doctrines, saints and rituals, holy sites and much more. They also provide sets of links to other sites, especially those of high-ranking theologians.[13]

The organizations of *'ulama'* at the centres for the teaching of theology, especially those of the *hawza*s in Qom in Iran and Najaf and Karbala in Iraq, present their own pages. These contain typically exten-

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11 S. Rosiny, "The Tragedy of Fatima az-Zahra': A Shi'a Historians' Debate in Lebanon", in R. Brunner and W. Ende (eds), *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001, 207–219. Some assassinations of leading Shiite clerics in Iraq since April 2003, especially the killings of 'Abd al-Majid al-Khu'i on 7.4.2003 and Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim on 29.8.2003 as well as the failed attempt on the lives of 'Ali al-Sistani and Muhammad Sa'id al-Hakim, should also be read in the context of this struggle for religious authority.
12 The World Wide Web is highly volatile. All the URL-addresses mentioned in this article were last checked in March 2007.
13 See for example: http://www.al-islam.org, http://www.al-shia.org. Further examples are listed in Appendix 3.

sive material on the biographies and writings of the main *mujtahids* at
the centres, as well as links to their personal homepages. Online eulo-
gies emphasize the spiritual significance of their biographies, present-
ing their original teachers and their own writings as proofs of learning,
and praising their social and political commitment; all this is consid-
ered essential if a *mujtahid* is to gain personal prestige and eventually
become a *marja'*.

Many high-ranking legal experts, especially the *marja's*, increasingly
use the Internet as a means of intercourse with their followers *(muqallids)*.
They answer questions on ritual and customary practice via e-mail,
offer their prayers and preaching as text, audio or even video downloads
on the web, present their own biographical data and publications, ad-
vertise their institutions, and sometimes collect dues via e-banking.[14]
These digital forms of communication may one day replace the estab-
lished face-to-face contact through which local and regional *'ulama'* act
as personal intermediaries and representatives of the *marja'*. Meanwhile,
the offices of nearly all *marja's*, even those of some dead ones, run their
own homepages. There are sites of Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah,
Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim (assassinated in August 2003), Muhammad
Sa'id al-Hakim, 'Ali Khamene'i, Abu-l-Qasim Khu'i (d. 1992), Ruhullah
Khomeini (d. 1989), Fadil Lankarani, Muhammad Taqi al-Mudarrisi,
Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr (assassinated in 1999), Muhammad al-Shirazi
(d. 2001), 'Ali al-Sistani and many more.[15]

Ritual is one of the major topics on the Shia Web. Many homepages
offer prayer timetables and support for the organization of *ziyara* and
hajj trips; they transmit photo galleries, videos, prayers, lectures or ser-
mons on ritual practices like those of 'Ashura'.[16] Since the target groups
for these pages reach far beyond the local Shiite communities of the
Middle East, online instruction concerning the pillars of Islam – the

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14 For a list of such homepages see Appendix 1.
15 See Appendices 1 and 2.
16 See e. g. http://www.ashura.com, http://www.hajj.org, http://www.al-islam.org/
    help/karbala/index.htm, http://www.al-islam.org/gallery/, http://www.duas.org,
    http://www.karbala.com.

duties of prayer, pilgrimage, fasting and alms-giving – and various rituals create a new kind of "global code" for Shiite religious behaviour, which transcends local practice. This reinforces a general trend toward "Islamic globalization", whereby local differences and special customs that are pleasing in the sight of God are levelled down through juridical norms of the *shari'a* that are regarded as universally binding on all Muslims. Many of the homepages are aimed at scattered Shiite communities living abroad, from Canada to New Zealand, from Sweden to South Africa, and offer them advice on permissible, recommended and forbidden forms of personal conduct which must also fit their varied needs and circumstances. The Internet helps such communities to develop new organizational structures and to keep in touch with their countries of origin.[17] Most pages are largely given over to characterizations of the organizational structure, the membership and the range of activities. To intensify and channel communication among the members of dispersed communities – through religious discourse as well as such things as business relations and marriage announcements[18] – is a special aim of the institutions residing in Western countries.

In the religious field, the Internet strengthens the impact of the written word as a translocal and transpersonal form of communication. Although most of the homepages are made less monotonous by means of sounds, picture galleries, recorded sermons and sometimes even moving pictures, they lack the special directness of oral communications directed at a certain time and place to a fixed audience. Whole libraries of standard Shia treatises as well as recent publications may be downloaded or read online. One of the most extensive Shiite sites, maintained by the Ahlul-Bait World Assembly in Teheran, offers a huge

17 http://www.shialink.org listed 146 homepages of local Shia communities, about half of them based in North America, Europe and Australia. Many of the local communities may also be found in the huge Shia link-collections (see appendix 3).

18 Some examples of specifically Shia (but not necessarily religious) websites organizing the communities abroad are: http://www.shiabusiness.com for "business within the community", http://www.shia-jobs.com, a Shia job agency which is no longer accessible, and http://www.shiamatch.com for marriage advertisements.

amount of digitalized and translated Islamic resources. This "Digital Islamic Library Project" (DILP) describes itself as

> a non-profit private Internet-based group of people operating throughout the world. Our objectives are to digitize and present on the Internet quality Islamic resources, related to the history, law, practice, and society of the Islamic religion and the Muslim peoples with particular emphasis on Twelver Shia Islamic school of thought. The purpose is to facilitate dissemination of knowledge through this new medium to locations where such resources are not commonly or easily accessible.[19]

Some Shia publishing houses offer their publications on the net.[20] Both long-established and newly founded institutions and organizations, such as *hawzas*,[21] mosques, *Husayniyyas*[22] and social charitable organizations *(mabarrat)*,[23] present themselves on the Internet and canvas support to strengthen their influence in the community. You can organize online your hajj to Mecca or your pilgrimage *(ziyara)* to the Imams' shrines.[24]

Islamic political parties, sometimes connected to a specific *marja'*, are another important presence on the "Shia Web". For example, the General Secretary of the Lebanese Hizbullah, Hasan Nasrallah, serves

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19 See the self-portrayal on http://www.al-islam.org/info. See also M. Brückner, "Der Ayatollah im Netz – offizielle zwölferschiitische Websites", *Orient* 43/4 (2002), 537ff.. Further examples of online libraries are: http://www.hadith.net and http://www.rafed.net.

20 Some examples: http://www.shiabooks.net/, http://www.al-khoei.org/catalog/, http://www.fadakbooks.com/, http://www.daralmahaja.com, http://shiatime.tripod.com/. Many of the publishers listed in http://www.darislam.com/home/khadamat/libraries.htm (no more available) are Shiite.

21 Examples of this type are: http://www.Hawzah.net, http://www.al-shia.com.

22 See e. g. http://www.alhussain.com.

23 Examples are: al Mabarrat (http://www.mabarrat.org.lb), the charitable association of Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, and the Khu'i-Foundation (http://www.alkhoei.org.uk), an international network which was brought into being by the late *marja'* Abu al-Qasim Khu'i (d. 1992) and is maintained by his followers and relatives.

24 See for example the "Hajj Assistance Committee for North America", http://www.ziyarat.org.

as the representative in Lebanon of the Iranian *marjaʿ* ʿAli Khameneʾi.[25] The Iraqi Hizb al-Daʿwa al-Islamiyya (Islamic Call Party) had close links to the *marjaʿ* Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr[26], who was executed in 1980. Al-Majlis al-Aʿla li-l-Thawra al-Islamiyya fi l-ʿIraq (The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, SCIRI[27]) was led by Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim[28] until his assassination in August 2003; he was considered by his followers as a *marjaʿ* on political and social issues. Finally, Munazzamat al-ʿAmal al-Islami (Organization of Islamic Action) is led by Muhammad Taqi al-Mudarrisi, who is similarly considered a *marjaʿ* by his followers.[29]

The Lebanese theologian Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah was probably the first *marjaʿ* to post his own homepage, in 1997.[30] He also uses the web for his own "questions and answers", and he is one of the few who reflect the impact of Internet technology. In an interview with the Lebanese daily *Al-Nahar* in April 2000, he praised the Internet for the fact that it transcends national borders and bypasses the restrictive censorship of Arab states; it thus gives people access to his readings and writings in countries where his books are still forbidden, mostly for sectarian reasons. Defending the Internet against those who regard it as just another tool of Western imperialist propaganda, Fadlallah insists that one should take over the positive elements of Western culture and use the Internet to argue against its negative impulses. The main aim of his and similar homepages is to present a positive picture of the "original Islamic culture" *(al-thaqafa al-islamiyya al-asila)*, thereby correcting the

25 http://www.hizbollah.org, http://www.hizbollah.tv, http://www.hezbollah.org (these sites are often disturbed by hackers), http://www.nasrollah.org.
26 http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Cyprus/8613 for Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr; http://www.islamicdawaparty.org is the current site of the party, which underwent several splits in the last few decades.
27 http://www.sciri.ws.
28 http://www.al-hakim.com, http://www.alshahid.com (no more available).
29 http://www.almodarresi.com.
30 The seminaries in Qom and the office of the *marjaʿ* Muhammad Rida al-Gulpaigani (d. 1993) started to use digital media for religious sources and for internal communication via Intranet in the middle of the 1980s already.

negative image of Islam in the West.[31] But such a missionary purpose is not dominant in *marja's* sites directed at a Shiite audience.

The *marja's'* websites and challenges to their religious authority

The website of a *marja'* usually starts with a section on his biography. It contains links to some of his publications, lists ceremonial and other activities and affiliated centres, offers advice on how to fulfil religious duties *('ibadat)*, and sometimes makes it possible to listen to the latest Friday sermon. The Question & Answers or *fatwa* section is an important part of the site; it becomes very popular, and relatively easy, for anyone interested to ask him for legal advice via e-mail. Emigrants, for example, who may have lost contact with their local Imam, are now able to get in touch directly with their *marja'*. Sheikh Muhammad al-Qubaisi, the "Internet sheikh" of the Lebanese *marja'* Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, told me in an interview in March 2001 that one hundred queries reach his office each day via e-mail, another five to ten via fax and fewer than five by letter. Fadlallah personally proof-reads all his answers.[32]

Though posted before the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime, the following passage from Ayatollah Sistani's homepage underlines the benefits, but also mentions the technical and political problems, of Internet use in the Middle East:

> One of the main functions of a *Marji e Taqlid* [sic] is to answer the many *fiqh* questions put forward to him. In the past, questions were usually asked directly by those who personally went to see the *Marji-e-Taqlid* [sic]. Years later, letters and

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31 *Al-Nahar*, 12 April 2000.
32 In the already mentioned interview in *Al-Nahar*, 12 April 2000, Fadlallah said that his web page was visited by 20,000 persons a month, and that twenty questions of *fiqh* were reaching him every day via e-mail.

faxes became more common, and now with the ease of the internet e-mail looks likely to take over. It is in response to this that we have decided to set up this page. You may ask any *fiqh* question(s) on Islamic Issues where the opinion of Ayatollah Seestani is required […]. However, please be patient for the replies to your questions as the Ayatollah lives in Iraq, where there is very limited Internet Access. Hence all your questions have to be forwarded using more traditional methods.[33]

Some of the *marja's* post huge *fatwa*-collections online, or even their whole *risala 'amaliyya* (standardized set of questions and answers), usually in Arabic and sometimes in Farsi and English. This genre reaches a much wider audience than ever before. With the many *fatwas* offered online, it is much easier to search for and to compare the various teachings. There are plans to list the *fatwas* of several *marja's* alongside one another, which would ease the choice between them.[34] But this remains music of the future, and even search engines for individual sites are still an exception. Such possibilities may further intensify the rivalry among *marja's*, who may feel it necessary to distinguish themselves by offering different answers on points of law rather than just repeating those given by others. In struggling for young and solvent supporters – the main target group of the Internet – they are forced to modernize their legal findings. For example, educated, self-confident young women have become an important new target group for Islamic teaching, and many pages offer special sections for them.[35]

33 See http://www.najaf.org/English/question/question.htm (Office of 'Ali al-Sistani in Europe, 30.6.2000, no longer available).
34 Interview of the author with Sheikh al-Qubaysi, March 2001, Beirut.
35 The World Ahle-Bait Women's Organization maintains its own site at : http://www.wawo.cjb.net (not updated since 2001).

Conclusion

The Internet appears to harmonize in several respects with the structure of the Shiite communities. Relations between legal experts and believers have always transcended local and national borders. The *'ulama'* form networks through common studies and teachers, reciprocal visits and sometimes marriage bonds. They often share a common fate of sectarian discrimination and political repression. The *mujtahids'* teachings spread via envoys and local representatives from the centres of learning to the local communities of their followers, from whom they gain their income by religious taxes and donations. The *muqallids* submit their *fatwa* requests via the *wakils* to their *marja'*, in a permanent exchange of information, communication and money. Although the Shia theologians have developed a degree of hierarchy, their connections are still rudimentary and lack a formalized procedure for the acquisition and organization of religious authority. Legitimate authority is created through the recognition of other *mujtahids* and the conviction of one's own followers – that is, through communication.

For these reasons, use of the Internet for communication and as a tool for the organization of communities may lead to substantially changed relations among the *marja' al-taqlid*, his colleagues, his representatives and his followers. The intermediaries between *marja'* and believers are losing some of their influence, as the psychological and physical barriers to the direct questioning of a *marja'* decrease. Face-to-face contact may become the exception in the future, when believers send their queries by e-mail, pay their dues by e-banking and listen to the Friday sermon online.

Alliances between *marja's* have become commonplace, while rival claimants to the *marja'iyya* may be either tolerated, sidelined, shunned or simply rejected. Boxes in which a site organizer provides links to other Shia homepages are therefore of special interest for the study of religious authority, since they offer an opportunity to show respect – or, if the link is ignored, disrespect – for the learning of a fellow *mujtahid*.

In some cases, an opponent may even openly dispute the legitimacy of another *marjaʿ*.[36]

The plurality of self-styled *marjaʿs* and the plethora of online *fatwas* raise some essential questions that are now being discussed among intellectuals. Is it permissible for the individual to select the most favourable of a series of *fatwas*? The practice of choosing among the *fatwas* of several *marjaʿs*, which is called *tabʿid* (sharing out), has recently been permitted by the Lebanese *marjaʿ* Fadlallah.[37] But it may further undermine the restriction of *ijtihad* to mujtahids, since it demands a high level of consciousness for a believer to choose among several *fatwas* on his own. Indeed, he may come close to practising *ijtihad* himself.

Usually, the *muqallid* chooses his *marjaʿ* on the recommendation of a *mujtahid*, or at least of a fellow believer. But how can one gauge the reliability of religious judgements on the Internet? The individual is forced to take greater responsibility for his own solutions. Internet users still seem to underestimate new options like online discussion groups on religious, social and political issues.[38] But, if the chat-rooms were to become more popular, they could further erode the exclusive authority of the *mujtahids* to answer the believers' questions. Does the Internet therefore undermine the theological hierarchy and facilitate a lay inter-

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36 In his section *"istiftaʾat"*, Kazim al-Haʾiri, an Iraqi *marjaʿ* residing in Qom, openly questions the authority of Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah to practice *ijtihad* (see http://www.alhaeri.org). Obviously this *"fatwa"* is the result of political rivalry more than of a qualified judgment, for it appears under the rubric "Questions concerning the situation in Iraq" (though Fadlallah resides in Lebanon) and both Fadlallah and Haʾiri are competing for *muqallids* among the same spectrum of politicized Shiites in Iraq.

37 T. Aziz, "Fadlallah and the Remaking of the Marjaʿiya" in L. S. Walbridge (ed.), *The Most Learned of the Shiʿa: The Institution of the Marjaʿ Taqlid*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, 205–215; M. H. Fadlallah, *Al-Nadwa*, vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Malak, 1997, 508 ff.

38 See http://www.shiachat.com.

pretation of theology and normative action? Might this lead to a process of "secularization within Shia Islam"?[39]

On the one hand, the confusing array of contradictory rules and information may also lead to new forms of parochial closure and dogmatism; the pages of traditionalist *mujtahids* are often filled with puffed-up eulogies, but may contain no significant legal opinion concerning topical social or political issues. On the other hand, even these traditionalists feel compelled to present themselves on the Web in order to reach their *muqallids* and, indirectly, to remind them to pay their religious dues. This sets up pressure for them to participate in the intra-communal discourse.

Historically it took years if not decades for the "information revolution" to reach a wider audience and to precipitate fundamental social changes. The Internet as such will hardly cause a revolution inside the Shia clergy's hierarchy. But it will further intensify and accelerate a process of change driven by the challenges of modernity. The influence of political power in Iran and Iraq, the party politics of Lebanon, Bahrain and recently Iraq, the socio-political situation of exile communities, the processes of social and economic change, and last but not least the personal conduct of the religious authorities themselves are important factors in the transformation of religious authority in Twelver Shia Islam.

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39 For a more general account of this widening of popular discourse on religious issues, see D. F. Eickelman, "Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary Arab Societies", *American Ethnologist* 19/4 (1992), 643–655; D. F. Eickelman, and J. W. Anderson (eds.), *New Media in the Muslim World*, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Appendix 1: Websites of *marja's*

al-Ardabili, 'Abd al-Karim al-Musawi: http://www.ardebili.org
Fadlallah, Muhammad Husayn: http://www.bayynat.org,
    http://www.mabarrat.org.lb (no more available)
Al-Fayad, Muhammad Ishaq: http://www.alfayadh.net
al-Gulpaigani, Lutfallah al-Safi: http://www.saafi.ir
al-Ha'iri, Kazim: http://www.alhaeri.org
al-Hakim, Muhammad Baqir (assassinated 2003): http://www.al-hakim.com
al-Hakim, Muhammad Sa'id: http://www.alhakeem.com
al-Khamene'i, 'Ali: http://www.leader.ir, http://www.khamenei.ir/
al-Khu'i, Abu al-Qasim (d. 1992): http://www.alkhoei.org.uk,
    http://www.alseraj.net
al-Khomeini, Ruhullah (d. 1989): http://www.khomeini.org
al-Lankarani, Muhammad Fadil: http://www.lankarani.com
Makarim al-Shirazi, Nasir: http://makaremshirazi.org,
    http://www.amiralmomenin.net
Misbah Yazdi, Muhammad Taqi: http://www.mesbahyazdi.org
al-Mudarrisi, Muhammad Taqi: http://www.almodarresi.com,
    http://www.modarresi.org
al-Muntazari, Husayn 'Ali: http://www.montazeri.com
al-Najafi al-Bakistani, Bashir Husayn: http://www.alnajafy.com
al-Ruhani, Muhammad Sadiq: http://www.imamrohani.com/, http://www.istefta.com
al-Sadr, Muhammad Baqir (assasinated 1980):
    http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Cyprus/8613/
al-Sadr, Muhammad Sadiq (assassinated 1999): http://www.alsader.com (no more
    available)
al-Sana'i, Yusuf: http://www.saanei.org/ (no more available)
Shahrudi, Muhammad: http://www.shahroudi.net
al-Shirazi, Muhammad (d. 2001) and Sadiq al-Shirazi (his successor):
    http://www.alshirazi.net, http://www.shirazi.org.uk, http://alshirazi.com
al-Sistani, 'Ali: http://www.al-shia.com, http://www.sistani.org,
    http://www.1god.org, http://www.rafed.net/, www.imamhadi.net,
    www.imamreza.net, http://www.aqaed.com/, http://www.najaf.org
al-Tabrizi, Jawad: http://www.tabrizi.org

Appendix 2: Useful Link Collections for *marja's* and other *mujtahids*

http://www.geocities.com/hussaynia/ulama.html
http://www.gooya.com/groups.htm
http://www.jafariyanews.com/biographies.htm

Appendix 3: Further Shiite Link Collections

http://www.gooya.com
http://www.shiasearch.net
http://www.topshia.com
http://www.shialink.org
http://www.geocities.com/Wellesley/7261/links.html
http://www.imamreza.net/arb/services/islamicsites/index.php

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The aim of the series "Worlds of Islam" of the Swiss Asia Society is to publish high-quality, representative work issuing from academic research on all aspects of Islam. It comprises, and receives, studies on present-day and historical Islamic cultures and societies covering the fields of art, literature and thought as well as translations and interpretations of important sources. Furthermore the series intends to present studies that offer expert knowledge on relevant themes and current questions appealing not only to the academic public, but also to an audience generally interested in the Islamic World.

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Dorothea Krawulsky

Eine Einführung in die Koranwissenschaften

ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān

Bisher haben sich nicht allzu viele Forscher der westlichen Islamwissenschaft mit den Koranwissenschaften beschäftigt. In der klassischen arabisch-islamischen Literatur gibt es seit etwa dem 15. (nach islamischem Kalender seit dem 9.) Jahrhundert Monographien über die Koranwissenschaften, zu denen achtzig islamische Wissenschaften gehören. Gegenstand dieser achtzig Wissenschaften ist der Koran als offenbartes Wort Gottes und als Text. Heute werden an den modernen arabisch-islamischen Universitäten die Koranwissenschaften wieder als Studienfach betrieben und neue Arbeiten dazu verfaßt.

Diese Studie ist die erste westliche Monographie zu den Koranwissenschaften. Allerdings konnten hier nicht alle Themen der Koranwissenschaften ausführlich behandelt werden, sondern nur ein kleiner, wichtiger Teil davon. Im Brennpunkt der Untersuchung stehen die Gegenüberstellung der westlichen und der muslimischen Forschung auf diesem Gebiet und die unterschiedlichen Sichtweisen der Position des Korans in der Geschichte des Islams.

Aus dem Inhalt: Der Begriff ʿulūm al-Qurʾān – Die Literaturgattung Koranwissenschaften und ihre Entstehungszeit – Die 80 Koranwissenschaften – Prophetie und Offenbarung im Koran und in der islamischen Tradition – Die islamische Überlieferung und die westliche, kritische Forschung – Die Sammlung des Korans unter den ersten drei Kalifen aus muslimischer und westlicher Sicht – Die Bedeutung von mekkanisch und medinensisch im Koran und was daraus resultiert.

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